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VAUDEVILLE

SARAH BERNHARDT

VAUDEVILLE

THE BOOK *by* CAROLINE CAFFIN · THE PICTURES BY MARIUS DE ZAYAS

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IF we offend, it is with our good will
That you should think we come not to offend;
But with good will to show our simple skill.
That is the true beginning of our end
Consider then—we come; but in despite
We do not come. As minding to content you,
Our true intent is all for your delight.
We are not here that you should here repent you.
The actors are at hand; and by their show
You shall know all that you are like to know.
—From the Clown's Prologue in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream.*

FOREWORD

THE caterer of amusements has learned not only to supply the programme but also to stimulate the zest and eagerness with which it is anticipated. For this purpose he must spice his offering with novelty, more novelty and always novelty. Nowhere is this truer than in Vaudeville, for so rapid are the changes in the public appetite that the whole character of the entertainment may vary from one season to another. What is popular this year may vanish next, and no prophet can foretell the favorites of three years hence.

So in this book no attempt is made to cover the field of Vaudeville, for that field is as limitless as humanity itself. A few impressions which have projected themselves with more or less vividness upon the ever moving

picture of public favorites during the last few years, is the utmost that I have attempted. Of the many whose "intent is all for our delight" I have spoken of only a few. And well I know that, even as I write, new faces, new motives, new achievements are pressing forward to take their places in the shifting panorama.

New York, 1914.

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INTRODUCTION

OUR true intent is all for your delight." This line, from the halting prologue of the Clown's Play in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* might well be taken for the motto of Vaudeville. For it is ever the aim of the Vaudeville performer to seek the chord which shall evoke an answering vibration in his audience and to attune his offering in a key which, in spite of modulations and varying harmonies, shall strike constantly on that string.

The ability to recognize this answering vibration seems to call into play a sort of sixth sense, in response to which those whose "true intent is all for our delight" evolve for themselves an individual technique to accentuate the key in which they pitch their appeal. Into the discovery of this keynote and the creation of the technique it is inevitable that

there will enter something of that mysterious quality which we call Art.

So little time is allowed to each performer that their appeal is necessarily frankly direct. It hides itself behind no subtleties but is personal and unashamed. It looks its audience straight in the face and says, in effect, "Look at ME! I am going to astonish you!" It makes no claim to aloofness or impersonality, but comes right down to the footlights and faces the crowd and tells it "All for your Delight *We* are—here."

I was witnessing once a performance in Vaudeville, in which one of the turns was a little one act comedy by an actor of considerable repute on the legitimate stage. I am not going to tell his name though most of you would know it if I did. Behind me sat two young ladies, one of whom evinced her familiarity with the various turns by a running commentary on the age or novelty of each act and comparisons of it with other turns by the same performers; by explana-

tions of what was coming and a narration of personal details concerning the performers of the nature that find their way into the "theatrical notes" of the daily papers. When it came to the turn of the aforesaid actor the following conversation took place:

"D'ye know this one, Mame?"

"No, but I heard of him starrin' in high-brow stuff on Broadway."

"What did he quit for?"

"Search me!"

The comedy began and the actor made his appearance, absorbed in his part, taking no apparent notice of his audience. The comment behind me was resumed.

"Well! he certainly is a bum actor. See him turn his back on the audience!"

"Seems to be actin' to himself, don't he?"

"H'm, guess that's why he had to leave Broadway."

The play continued. As the interest developed the conversation languished somewhat but presently I heard a loud whisper:

"Say, he does make it seem sort of real, don't he?"

"Yes, but he don't act."

"Aw! but it's sort of real, ain't it?"

The climax found both ladies too absorbed to talk, but after the curtain fell on the third or fourth recall the final verdict was rendered.

"It did seem sort of real, but he ain't got no manners. I guess that's why he had to quit Broadway."

It was evidently the frank, personal appeal that these ladies missed, and the impersonal response to his curtain calls was the last straw that caused their resentment.

To provide true delight for a vaudeville audience you must have as a provoking cause some achievement apparently greater than that of the individuals in the audience. If the medium of the appeal be daring, the risk must be greater—or appear to be—than the man in front would care to face. If humor be the medium, not a single line must miss fire. If it be vulgarity, it will be grosser than the audience, as individuals, would

stand for. If it be skill, it must be proved as you watch it. You could never amuse an audience by displaying to it a specimen of skilful and minute engraving, the result of many years of toil. But let them see a cartoonist dash off a rough sketch in a few lines made before their eyes and he has secured their delight. In every case the effect must be vivid, instantaneous and unmistakable.

It is a very catholic and hospitable entertainment, embracing more forms of amusement than we could enumerate, this that we now call Vaudeville. Its name has little connection with its actual purpose and is only the latest of a long line of aliases, and not particularly appropriate at that. For the word owes its origin to a little French village in Normandy in the valley of the river Vire, named Vaudevire or Val-de-vire. Here lived, in the fifteenth century, one Olivier Bassel or Basselin, a poet, the composer of convivial songs, which became popular and were sung by the common

people, and introduced into plays and entertainments. The name was thus given to all such songs, and later to the entertainments into which they were introduced. Dr. Johnson alludes to Vaudeville as a species of comic opera, or dialogue interspersed with lively songs. The songs were often Rabelaisian in their frankness or cutting in their satire, but this was in accordance with the age in which they flourished. Just why the name has superseded the older one of "Varieties" I do not know.

But under its various names and in every clime this form of entertainment has flourished. The Indian Fakir, the Turkish Story Teller, the Egyptian Snake Charmer, the Japanese Wrestler, the plaintive mandolin-accompanied ditties of the Cingalese, each makes appeal for the delight of the audience.

Here are some of its aliases: the Oriental Bazaar; the Village Fair of Merrie England; the Café Chantant of France, where originally performers and audience were all

one; the old English Music Hall, with its master of ceremonies, announcing with a blow from his mallet: "The next number on our programme, gentlemen," and advising "Order your drinks, ladies and gentlemen"; the old Museum of this country with its freaks and monsters and "educational features" as additional attractions; and later the Variety Theatres where many of our present favorites passed their apprenticeship.

It was only in comparatively recent years that the management of these entertainments sought to make of them places of harmless amusement and recreation for all classes of society, to which women and children might go unescorted without fear. The man who frequented the old English Music Hall did not take his wife or mother or sister.

Watch the audience trooping into a New York Vaudeville house. There is no more democratic crowd to be seen anywhere. It differs from a theatre audience in the fact

that usually more than half is composed of men. There are many reasons for this. One of them is the permission to smoke in parts of the house. Another is the familiar cry of the "tired business man" who doesn't want to be asked to think, or even to keep his mind continually on one set of characters. It is something of a mental effort to watch the development of a play that lasts the whole evening. Then there are many men who dislike continual conversation. I suppose no women object to this.

An excuse once offered to me by an habitué of the Vaudeville for preferring that form of entertainment to a play was that, in Vaudeville, if one turn be bad you always hope that the next will be good; whereas in a play, if the first act be bad, you know that the rest will continue to grow worse.

Anyhow, men of all degrees come trooping in; some alone, some in batches, and some accompanied by women, or more often by one woman, wherein again is a difference from the theatre-going party. Meanwhile

at the Matinée women will arrive alone and in parties, especially at the uptown houses or in Brooklyn. There is a large proportion of non-New Yorkers, men in town on business trips, college boys come up for a lark, business men with an hour to spare before an appointment. I sat one afternoon in front of a group of well-built, upstanding young Irishmen whose conversation seemed to prove them to be police officers off duty. They discussed politics discreetly without naming names, especial interest being shown in the sins of omission and commission of one "John" to whom "the organization" had shown some favor, though he was voted "too stand offish, never goes around with the boys." One of the group was escorting a lady and only when "John" failed as a topic of conversation did he introduce her to his companions with the suave: "Have you meet my lady friend," and the conversation was adapted to suit her range of ideas.

On another visit I sat next to two dear little old Brooklyn ladies who were delighted

with the audacities of Gertrude Vanderbilt, because she "looked so like dear Eloise." On the other hand they declared a visiting English singer to be a "perfectly odious person. She distorts herself in such an unwomanly way."

Now, betwixt these contrasting elements —and the extremes are even greater than the two I have named—the programme must fill in the breach. There must be something for every one and, though the fastidious may be a little shocked (the fastidious rather like to be shocked sometimes), they must not be offended, while the seeker for thrills must on no account be bored by too much mildness.

It is, therefore, no easy task which confronts the manager. And added to his other worries is a demon of which he lives in fear. He seeks it out in every act. He gazes suspiciously at every visitor for fear the latter has it concealed somewhere. I do not know, but I strongly suspect him of holding a ceremony of exorcism every Monday morning,

sprinkling every crevice and cranny, every bit of scenery, every prop, "sealing unto himself" against its baleful influence every sceneshifter, limelight man and orchestra leader, and even then being worried and haunted with dread of it.

And the name of this hideous demon—its dreaded name—is Highbrow! Of course it never has intruded. Occasionally some heretic manager has dared to take a chance and allow a suspect to appear on his boards. If the venture succeeded, we know for certain that it was free from the taint. For it is the first law of the cult of Vaudeville that "Highbrow Stuff Never Pays."

With memories of Sarah Bernhardt still in our minds, we may doubt this theory. Highbrows have been known to claim kinship with her and with others who have appeared in Vaudeville. But NO! These cannot be Highbrow. These are Successes, and as such appeal to ordinary human beings. But the World moves, and sometimes a curious tremor indicates that even the firm-rooted

prejudice against the Highbrow is being shaken by a suspicion that perhaps, after all, he too is a human being and appeals to other human beings.

Let us look again at our audience. There it sits, waiting for the show to begin, good-natured, eager to be amused, willing to accept its entertainers at their own valuation just so long as they are amused. It will applaud faintly even an unpopular turn from pure unwillingness to be hypercritical, but its genuine appreciation is unmistakable. I am not referring to "tryouts" or "amateur nights," where the baiting of the performer is as much a part of the show as the slaughter of horses at a bull fight. Those are another story. But I have frequently heard people speak slightingly of a performance and then applaud at its close from pure goodwill to the performer.

"What are you applauding for, you said it was a poor turn?" I once heard a woman ask of her escort, who had indeed condemned

the act as "rotten." But he replied good-naturedly——

"Oh, well! He's got his bread and butter to earn like the rest of us."

But the manager knows that, good-natured and tolerant as the audience seems, its patience would soon be exhausted if he allowed it to be abused. It would make very little open demonstration, but it would cease to frequent his house, regardless of the fact that he too has his bread and butter to earn.

It is that feeling of good-fellowship that makes the audience love to be on confidential terms with the performer, to be treated as an intimate. It loves to have the actor step out of his part and speak of his dressing-room, or hint at his salary, or flourish a make-up towel. There are no secrets, no reserves between them, they know each other as man and man—or they think they do. For the actor has studied the little weaknesses of his audience, and plays up to them.

For he knows that, above all things, the

audience is there to laugh. Give it an excuse for that, and it is his. It will seize any excuse to indulge in this, its favorite pastime, and, if it may not laugh with you, it will need very little to make it laugh at you. The slightest contretemps in the performance, and your audience is in a gale. The unexpected appearance of a cat on the stage and every chance of seriousness is gone. Even when laughter was intended, I have heard a queerly pitched laugh from the audience attract the amusement of the house from the performer to itself and almost break up the show.

But there are performers to whom these interruptions would be well-nigh impossible. They dominate their audience and hold them enthralled under their spell. They have learned, either by experience or instinct, so exactly the key in which to pitch their appeal, in order to evoke that answering vibration from their audience, that they can sound it at will, modulate it into what harmonies and expression they please, and ever

be sure of the response. Let us watch some of them as they do it, and try to catch a hint of their methods, and possibly analyze the reason of our response.

The show is about to begin. The orchestra leader is in his place, tapping with his bâton the call to attention. The music starts, the curtain rises.

"The actors are at hand and by their show you shall know all that you are like to know."

EVA TANGUAY

VAUDEVILLE

CHAPTER I

The Force of Personality

A CHARACTERISTIC Vaudeville turn, and one dear to the heart of every true Vaudevillian, is that of the Song and Dance artist. He or she, for the turn may include either or both, seems to be the epitome of Vaudeville. The audience may be forced into admiration by the superb acting of a Bernhardt or the dancing of Ruth St. Denis, but it never loses consciousness that these are exotics, who demand a certain readjustment of its point of view. But it settles back into its seat with comfortable, confidential good humor when one of its own song and dance artists approaches it with the direct, familiar appeal of this child of its own creation. It knows for a cer-

tainty when it may laugh and when it may sigh, and it may be asked to do both in one breath: but the appeal will not be puzzlingly subtle or rarefied, nor will it leave any doubt as to just how one should feel about it. The only elusive quality in these turns is that ever interesting one of personality and on this each song and dance artist founds his individual edifice.

For at first glance the special favor for this or that artist may seem to be a mystery. Here is one whose voice is meagre and whose dancing is negligible. Yet her appearance is greeted with salvos of applause; while another, with pretty face, graceful dancing and sweet singing voice, attracts but languid approval. But as we become better acquainted with the methods and appeal of the different artists we find it is ever the strong personality and the ability to get it across the footlights and impress it upon the audience that distinguish the popular performer. And the ability to do this, quite as much as the ability to sing

or dance, is a matter of special study and watchful experience. Of course it looks easy and natural, as if it were no effort; but when you see the same turn given by the same artist two or three times you become aware of how little that is effective is left to chance, even in what seem like impromptu effects. That genial familiarity, that confiding smile which seems to break out so spontaneously, the casual entrance and glance round the audience—all have been nicely calculated and their effect registered, but with the artist's sympathy which informs each with the spirit of the occasion and robs it of mechanical artifice.

Let us look at the performances of two or three of those who have created a medium of their own, whose appeal has that originality which for want of a better name we must call genius.

A singer, yes—She can dance too, if need be, but never mind that, it is the singing in her case that counts—Miss Nora Bayes. A figure, slight, almost fragile, but suggest-

ing graceful curves. The arms from neck to finger-tips, the outline of the eyelids, the poise of the head, the line from neck to feet, all are drooping curves, very pliant and ever changing. Is there such a thing as sparkling languor? If there is, she has it. She greets the audience with a slow, sideway glance that seems to sweep, curving out from her eyes over her face. Then a flash of teeth and dimples, and again the face is almost serious, with a little wistfulness, as though she would hate to think that you might not like her. Now she turns again with sudden glance, to see if you caught the curving smile which followed the signs of your approval.

Her song is given so simply and naturally that it is hard to catch the artifice of it. There is a roguish sense of humor which brightens the eyes and curves the lips and sensitive little nostrils in a flashing smile, never straight at the audience, but sideways, with an archness which flatters you that she is confident you can see the humor as well

as she can. And, withal, there are a certain delicacy and gentleness about her which makes you want to meet her halfway. She needs no boisterous energy; you do not wish that she should have to work too hard for you. She can emphasize a point by a sly glance or a piquant *moue,* far better than by loudness or force. Her singing of "Kelly," one of the best of her songs in recent years and Irish through and through, had no particular energy or forcefulness, but was even a little deprecating in its sauciness. There is something in the quality of her voice that suggests what Kipling calls the "throaty sob," and it is not entirely absent even in her merriest moments. It is genuinely Irish, characteristic of the nation which is merry in its fighting and saddest in its songs.

* * * * * * *

Now let us turn to an artist of the Dance and Song with the emphasis decidedly on the Dance—Gertrude Vanderbilt.

Whatever nationality may claim her de-

scent, Gertrude Vanderbilt may fairly be admitted to be a typical American girl. The long straight limbs, alert and yet a little drooping in their lines; the free and unafraid carriage of the head; the arms rather long in proportion; the shoulders a trifle broad and carried erect,—all these may be duplicated many times any fine winter afternoon on Fifth Avenue or the main thoroughfare of almost any city in the Union. And not only in physical makeup but in the spirit of her performance we find the epitome of much that characterizes the American girl. For she is in high spirits, carried along by a flood of youth and energy that makes for the joy of life. And added to this are a natural grace and the audacity that comes from never having met with defeat. Difficulties she may have encountered, yet one is convinced that they proved but a source of stimulation and were eventually overcome. So now she faces you with laughing cordiality, pleased that you are pleased with her, but never doubting for a moment that you

GERTRUDE VANDERBILT

would be. She sings with frank, unpretentious simplicity, not over-anxious to make points but by no means without a sense of humor. And then she dances and all the world seems young. So gay, so happy, so pleased with herself and with everything else that her good humor is infectious! The long limbs are compact of suppleness and agility, and swirl in quite surprising orbits. The sinuous figure bends and turns and skims over the ground, bounding with long, boyish strides, carefree, laughing, joyous.

She is appearing with her clever partner, George Moore. Perhaps it is their little burlesque melodrama, "The Villain still Pursued her." And the villain glides and grasps and stealthily approaches with truly villainous intensity, the grotesque angles of his limbs and their jerky movements full of dramatic drollery. And the lady flits with playful elusiveness around him, fully enjoying the fun and entering into it with dash and vigor, laughing at the absurdity of the thing just as frankly as the audience

does. When they dance together it is as a happy boy and girl having a good time. She is breezy, daring and buoyant, but free from coquetry or conscious allurement. As he whirls her round in a mad, headlong spin, she laughs from sheer love of the dare-devil adventure of it, assured of her own cool-headed poise, while he accepts her audacities in the spirit of frank camaraderie. The technical achievement of their dance is by no means extraordinary, but it is easy, graceful and very nonchalant, amused with itself as well as happy to amuse others. Laughing, romping, swirling youth; they seem to be just old enough to know that they are young. No wonder that even the most staid among their audience feel a glow of sympathy for these happy young people in whom they recognise an echo of the gaiety and irresponsibility of eternal youth.

* * * * * * *

And what is this long-legged, sauntering creature who lolls on to the stage, too bored and supercilious to greet the audience with

anything but a stare of surprise at their "queerness"? It is Laddie Cliff, he of the wonderful legs and abnormally vacant countenance. Some almost imperceptible sign, a twitch of the eyebrow, a turn of the head, and the audience are made aware that he is as conscious as they of the ludicrousness of his silliness. Otherwise, so absolutely is he absorbed in his impersonation, that the contemptuous surprise of his regard would be intolerable. He regards all those people out there as such extraordinary creatures, don't cher know? And he relates with the baldest self-complacency the amazement that his own eccentricities have created in others. The fragile legs seem scarcely able to support the languid body and really to need the assistance of the stout walking stick.

In a voice high-pitched and querulous he recounts the lack of appreciation shown by a vulgar world or makes a few cynical observations on life in general. And yet, despite self-complacency and cynicism, there is nothing ill-humored about this callow philos-

opher, who retains some of the illusions of youth in spite of the would-be worldliness displayed either as the Eton schoolboy or the very young man-about-town. His catch-words of commonplace phrases, with their unexpected twists of meaning, set you laughing with him as well as at him.

And while you are laughing, the strange, pipestem legs begin to twinkle and cavort in the most astonishing convolutions. The seemingly languid body sways in unison, while the sharp-featured, vacant face watches in amazed disapproval, which constantly jerks the limbs out of the rhythm of equilibrium and throws them into impossible attitudes and angles, from which predicaments they extricate themselves with agile dexterity and continue their capers. This way, that way, they fly; feet soaring to weird heights, seemingly far higher than anatomy allows. And the disapproving face calls them down with the suddenness of a mother catching her offspring stealing jam from the top shelf of the pantry. Then to show

LADDIE CLIFF

that theirs is no guilty conscience, up they fly again, those gay, irresponsible legs. It's just a little way they have, so please excuse them, the face seems to say. And thus it continues, the face apparently surprised and apologetic for the unconventionalities of those anatomy- and gravitation-defying legs.

Laddie Cliff's songs are slight. Possibly, sung by any one else, they would amount to nothing out of the ordinary. But given with his mixture of cunning and simplicity there is not one that does not hit the bull's eye of humor, in spite of the English of it.

* * * * * * *

Now, having looked at one artist who sings more than she dances; at another who dances better than she sings; and at a man who both sings and dances, let us look at another, a very puzzling enigma and a contradiction of every preconceived notion that we may have as to what constitutes a successful entertainer. A Song and Dance

Artist who does not dance, cannot sing, is not beautiful, witty or graceful, but who dominates her audience more entirely than anyone on the Vaudeville stage—Eva Tanguay!

How shall we account for the almost breathless intensity with which the audience awaits her entrance? We suddenly find that every one is sitting up, straight and eager. The orchestra is playing with new vim. The instruments seem sharper and louder. The very lights appear to burn brighter, so tense is the atmosphere of expectancy. What is this noise that breaks on our ears? A loud chattering voice, high-pitched, strident, voluble. Look! Here she comes, with quick, fluttering steps and restless outstretched hands, a dynamic personality all nerves and excitement.

The first thing that strikes you in her appearance is the trim, alert figure, held so tense and straight that energy exudes from it. Then your eye is arrested by the wild mop of stiff, tousled blonde hair, which

seems so charged with electric vigor that no amount of combing or brushing could alter its assertive unruliness. It seems as if the exuberance of her intense vitality radiates through this raffish aureole, setting the surrounding atmosphere agog with vivacity.

Presently, you notice the saucy, broad, good-humored face, with large, smiling mouth and pertly turned-up nose. The eyes are small and impudent and snap and sparkle as though they were black, but I strongly suspect that they are really blue. Every inch of her from the topmost spike of yellow hair to the tip of her never-resting toe is alive, nervous, vital.

The whirlwind of sound and the patter of restless, aimlessly pacing feet continue incessantly. The voice has no music in it. It emphatically and unhurriedly retails its self-centred chantings or it shrieks against the full blare of the orchestra and mightily prevails. The steps make no attempt at rhythmic movement. Sometimes they prance in gleeful abandon with a wide fling; but

the greater part of the time it is patter, patter, patter, first in this direction, then in that, back and forth, up and down, nowhere in particular, turning sharply in the middle of a step to go in the opposite direction —just the undirected romping of a healthy, restless child.

And naïvely, childishly, self-conscious are her songs—if one can call them songs. Mere recitation of her own eccentricities, her extravagances, her defiance of all conventions, with a refrain of "I don't care," phrased in one way or other, forms the topic. There is no appeal in her attitude toward her public, just a saucy, impudent grin. "I don't care" she seems to say; "this is my stunt—like it or not, it's fun to do it, so I don't care!" And the audience likes it.

Why? Well, I have tried very hard to find out, even to the extent of questioning my neighbors. The replies I have received have not been very illuminating. "She is different," said one. That is true, but is that enough? "She is so clever," said another.

JEFFERSON D'ANGELIS

To my further question, "In what way?" there was no satisfactory reply. "She is so happy," was another suggestion, but watching closely I was not convinced. Exuberant vitality, excitement, and self-assertiveness—yes, all these in abundance, but happiness? No, she only "makes a noise like it."

I wonder if the secret, after all, is that she is the epitome of that strong force of modern civilization—advertising. It is more than the press-agent's work, though that has been very well done. We have come, already impressed by the amount of her salary, her continual engagements, her popularity. But she herself tells us and keeps on telling us how extraordinary she is, how successful, how unassailable by criticism and how popular. Again and again we are reminded that money is flowing in on her. Again and again we are informed that she is unique. And this reiteration, so forcibly and believingly uttered, with an assurance that we really are interested, hypnotizes us into a belief that we are. The public likes

it, it is the secret of the success of advertising and here is that success embodied.

It must be admitted that she is good advertising material. She has vivacity that impresses her audience as spontaneous; assurance that looks like conviction and a good humor that passes for frankness, while personality and vitality she has in abundance. These form foundation enough on which to raise a perfect sky-scraper of illusion at which every passer-by will gape and about which the man in the street will glibly quote any information put into his mouth by an interested exploiter, proud to be familiar with so audacious an enterprise. "Make 'em talk, make 'em laugh!" Behold the end desired by the cult of self—Advertisement!

It is when a concrete accomplishment is attempted that you discover how flimsy is the edifice. In the so-called "Salome" we look in vain for any expression of even the most elemental of the passions of that grim drama. For the abandon of the dance we see only the exuberant prancings of a gig-

gling girl. Her horror at the reanimation of the head of the murdered prophet has no more of awe in it than has the hysterical shrieking of a servant maid, alarmed by a mouse.

The best act that I have seen Eva Tanguay do was one which introduced two droll little baby boys. There was a touch of genius in that. For they are not seraphic, angel-faced infants, but homely little tow-headed tykes, full of the very mischief, who go through their burlesque of her with gusto and spar at each other at its close as joyously and whole-heartedly as is the nature of all vigorous self-assertive young animals. And in her attitude toward them there is no sentimentality or mawkishness, but a wholesome, breezy fellowship, kindly and good-hearted.

Yet the fact remains that what the audience expects from her is energy, not art, and this is all that she lays claim to. She is an enigma hard to solve. Either she is the Circe of the Force of Advertising, in-

toxicating her admirers with the exuberance of her own verbosity. Or else she has indeed caught something of the elemental dynamic buoyancy that enables mankind to over-ride disaster and, having caught it, is radiating it upon a nerve-wracked world.

Anyway, she is an Enigma.

NORA BAYES

CHAPTER II

The Appeal of Character Study

EVERYONE of us prides him- or herself on being a student of human nature. We like to discover little traits and foibles in our fellows and to believe that, unless they are totally depraved and wrong-headed, we can understand them and make allowance for their "queerness." So the portrayer of character who will show to us types sufficiently unusual to pique our interest and curiosity, but human enough for us to recognize the essential characteristics not only amuses us with his emphasis on the humor of his study but flatters us by making us feel how thoroughly we understand human nature.

Of course we don't, not even the wisest of us. We understand a few essentials, com-

mon to the average of humanity, and are amused at the strong strokes with which the portrayer sketches in the individualities. At the best we translate what we observe through the medium of our own dispositions, all of which differ, so that at the same performance we are all receiving different impressions, and that is as near understanding as we can hope to get. Usually the portrayer must exaggerate the peculiarities or we should miss their significance, just as we are continually missing the significance of individual traits in real life.

The great portrayers of character in literature, such as Balzac and Dickens, knew this and knew, too, how to call our imagination into play to fill in the outlines left blank or only faintly indicated. Consequently we feel that the characters they portray are as familiar to us as our own personal friends, if not more so. Similarly, on the stage, the character-comedian presents his types with a few bold strokes that stimulate our imagination, and an extra emphasis on certain pe-

culiarities that do not necessarily distort but make larger and more distinct the features they wish to portray. The effect is not unlike those photographs taken at Coney Island, in which the head of the sitter is printed about four times larger in proportion to the body, but the likeness is unaltered.

The characterizations of both Albert Chevalier and Harry Lauder are emphasized in this manner. The salient traits of their subjects are made larger and more perceptible but never wilfully distorted. The humorous appeal comes by an enforcing of native peculiarities, not by inventing absurdities.

It is a long time since Albert Chevalier first introduced to us his London Coster. We had not known the type on this side of the Atlantic; and, truly, I believe that before the day of Chevalier very few Britishers were really familiar with this strongly individualized clan living in the very heart of their metropolis. For he is not an ordinary cockney, this coster with his quaint

costume and ready wit. His clan lives apart from their neighbors. He "keeps hisself to hisself" as he would tell you, marries the sister or daughter of a fellow coster and has his social set, distinct and separate as the caste of a Hindoo. He differs somewhat in appearance from the ordinary cockney. His features are more strongly modeled; and his body, though smaller, is more strongly knit. His tongue is fully as glib but his vernacular is peculiarly his own and of a pungency not always acceptable to outsiders. I speak in the present tense, but they tell me he is no longer found on 'Empstead 'eath on Bank 'olidy," in his smart square-cut coat of smooth cloth with velveteen collar, cuffs and pocket flaps; his flaring "trousies" and rows and rows of "pearlies," twinkling up and down his person; his low-crowned "bowler" or his cloth cap adorning the head of his "donna," while her feather-bedecked head-dress flaunts on his own close-cut poll. I even hear that no longer does he drive his "moke" to Epsom to view the classic Derby,

with his Missis by his side in her regulation plumed hat, proud and independent as the occupant of the smartest equipage on the hillside. I am glad I saw him in his prime, with his holiday wreath of cut paper of gaudy color round his hat; I am glad, if only because when I hear Chevalier in his coster songs I feel even more sure than most people that I can understand. But I suppose that seventy-five per cent. of the audience feels just the same way.

For Chevalier places him there before us, a vital human creature, rich in diversities of humor and pathos and sentiment, alive and convincing. What a glorious assurance there is in his whole demeanor! What a swagger in that long, darting stride! His voice, coarse and vibrant with the cockney twang, at times can soften to melting, shamefaced tenderness and pride, as he tells us of "My Old Dutch" or the "Little Nipper." He has supplied the suggestive outline of a picture of rude interiors, rich in hearty human feeling, and our imagi-

nation fills in the details to whatever extent we choose and the wife and little son are as real as if they stood before us on the stage.

Then see him, as with jaunty, imperturbable good temper and humorous appreciation, he describes how he "Knocked 'em in the Old Kent Road," or pays his tribute to Mrs. "Enery 'Awkins!" Every line of his body responds to the varying sentiments. The cock of the head, the square of the elbows, the raised shoulders, the foot thrust forward, heel down, toes elevated in his aggressive moments, the explanatory flirt of the thumb in this direction or that, the dignified but angular carriage in his tender moments. What pictures they all make! Ever there are a frankness and sincerity about him, and impulsiveness and simpleness of motive. And then, when from sheer gladness and jubilation he can express himself no other way, he breaks into a double shuffle, and heels and toe beat a tattoo, light and rapid as the roll of a kettle drum, while

head and hand perform humorous gestures of their own. Or else, he takes his hat from his head and with an impudent, comical gesture, replaces it an amazing angle which gives fresh grotesqueness to his figure; and this he will do in half a dozen different manners, each with a distinct expression of its own.

There are other pictures, too, a Chelsea Pensioner, a broken down actor, an old countryman, each one notable in its way but none as vital and human or so distinctly a creation as the coster. Chevalier has even attempted the "legitimate drama," but his performance, though creditable in itself, was not what the public wants from him. He has made us acquainted with this quaint coster fellow and, if we set out with the hope of meeting him, we are not content to be put off with some one else, no matter how worthy that someone else may be. And if it is true that the genuine breed of this urban peasant is dying out, long may we have

our Albert Chevalier to keep its memory green.

In many respects Harry Lauder is akin to Chevalier. They both work from the inner nature to the outward expression of their subject. They both represent the peasant—shrewd with the native shrewdness not taught in books; both have a philosophy gained by experience not by study. But Lauder's Scot has consciously summed up his experience and has grown canny, while Chevalier's coster is still much of a child of impulse.

Probably, if you met Harry Lauder unknown on the street, you might say that he was too thick set and heavy featured to make a good actor. But then, on the street he would not be walking with that perky strut and his eyes would not be twinkling nor could you watch the slow crafty smile wrinkling his nose as it spreads over his face. If you have seen all this, there is no longer any question of acting. For the time being he is the character he interprets

HARRY LAUDER

and his whole face and body are moulded to the requirements of that character.

As Chevalier's peasant is a peasant of the town, so Lauder's is essentially the peasant of the country. Slow thinking, cautious, deliberately studying those he comes in contact with, a little self-conscious, watching the effect he is producing. He tells in his broad Scottish accent of his waggeries, but, even while he is convulsed at his own pawky humor, he stops to give us a sharp glance to make sure we are not laughing at him instead of with him. He is careful to explain that he is no "fule," whatever you may take him for. He quite appreciates his own value and don't you forget it. He struts and preens himself, while he mentions as one of the admirable points of his "Daisy" that "She's very fond of Sandy." The jaunty cock of his head shows that he thinks her taste good in the matter for he is no end of a fellow, this Sandy in his smart uniform, with his little swagger stick. And he tells you with a sly leer that he is a gay dog, the

"pet o' all the slavies"; why! it's just terrible the way he breaks hearts. Or he describes the wedding orgies with chuckling reminiscence of the vagaries and antics in which the usually hard-headed, hard-working guests indulged by the time they were a "wee bit foo'." Or with unctuous, bacchanalian fervor he descants on the virtues of the "wee deoch-an-Doris."

Then there is that young scamp, the "saftest o' the Family," with all his impish tricks to take advantage of his title. He may be an idle young scrapegrace, but how he seems to lick his lips over the memory of his devilments and then blinks at you over his big nose, as if he were as innocent as a lamb, so that you applaud his evil deeds and make yourself accessory after the fact.

But the song of songs, with which Harry Lauder never fails to win every heart in his audience and which he is never excused, is "I lo'e a lassie." He comes forward, this solid, rather heavy-featured peasant, in his kilt and plaid and bonnet, carrying a stick,

all coils and convolutions. But he is not grotesque. There are a strength and honesty about him, and a rugged simplicity of manner. He begins to tell us, confidentially, just because we look like good fellows that he can talk to and he is bubbling over with the joy of it. His face lights up with a wide embracing smile; the words come, halting and cautious at first, for he is not going to tell us if we laugh. But soon he is pouring out his whole heart, the words coming softly, yet still slowly, as if there were a joy in their utterance which he was loath to hurry. He has told us his secret, and now he runs back to see if "she" is approaching. And how light and sure and poised is that thickset frame when it is in motion! How springy the step as he hurries forward to tell us behind his hand that "she's comin'!" As she trips in, his whole body is inflated and glowing with pride; and, indicating with a wag of his head, he tells us "that's her." It is such a fervent, loyal ecstasy, and the honest fellow is so sure that we sympathize

and just a little envy him, that we are filled with goodwill for him and his Scotch Bluebell.

He is so human and simple that we forget the art of it. What has he done? There was no supreme effort in it, no extraordinary vocal effects. He only just sang a little ballad in such a way as to make us forget we were one of a crowded audience of miscellaneous individualities and set us thinking of a stretch of heather-covered hillside and the throbbing heart of a man.

I have not said anything about his dancing, and yet those heavy-looking limbs can flicker and jig and fling with the lightness and poise of a première danseuse. And always the dance belongs to the character he is representing—perhaps that is why I didn't mention it before.

If you doubt the fact that Harry Lauder is an artist, take up any of his songs and in cold blood read it through and try to imagine it sung by a "fairly good" comedian. There is a very slight thread of idea strung

MRS. BROWN POTTER

together as warp and it is the singer himself who supplies the woof which binds the whole into the fabric which he spreads for our delight.

There are, of course, many character comedians, portraying in burlesque or grossly caricatured sketches this or that type. But there are not many who create an actual human character as do these two, Albert Chevalier and Harry Lauder. There are in my memory, however, at least two clean-cut comedy characters portrayed by Lilian Shaw, strongly contrasted and vividly portrayed.

The first was a slim, chic Parisienne, dressed quietly but very much à la mode; not a grisette and not quite an aristocrat. For she had not the demureness of the French girl who has always been chaperoned. In fact, there was something of the hardness of the girl who consciously has to look out for herself, knowing that her action may provoke comment. A man accosts her, she turns on him indignant at the

outrage. But she shows that she is not taken by surprise. In fact, she would have been more surprised, if she had escaped attention,—she might even have been disappointed. But she must make it quite clear that she is "Demoiselle tout à fait comme il faut." So she hurls voluble condemnation at the offender, and with a toss of the head picks her way daintily away from him; not, however, without a quick backward dart of the eye to be sure that he has lost none of the impressiveness of her rebuke.

The next picture was a tired, bedraggled young German mother, struggling with that misfit period when the responsibilities of a growing family rob her of her youthful rights to the fun and frolic and prettiness for which she still longs. She comes in with her baby carriage. She is conscientiously clean and mended and patched in all her belongings, but with no vestige of the comely prettiness which doubtless captivated her Fritz in the days when she went with him to dances. Her hair is flattened down,

YVETTE GUILBERT

smooth and tight; her shabby, faded shirt-waist rather badly ironed; her shoes, old and patched and clumsy. She sits near the baby carriage and regrets the old days when she used to put on her best clothes and go with her Fritz. Now Fritz goes and she stays at home and does all the thousand and one jobs which her conscientious housewifery imposes on her, just as if she were not the same pleasure-loving little soul she had been in the days of her courtship.

It was all admirably realized in the few verses of the song and in the tired energy with which she fussed over the baby; and the quiet sense of humor was never lost, so that the sketch did not stray into any sentimentality.

In speaking of character interpretation there is one name to which we must not fail to pay tribute for wonderful impressionistic sketches—that is the name of Yvette Guilbert. It is many years since she flashed across our stage dazzling her audience by the brilliancy of her work. Her methods

were very individual and her sketches had something of the character of those of the modern cartoonist who suggests instead of drawing many of his most vital lines. Her personality was always puzzling and elusive. She was retiring and yet daring. She was chic and yet gauche. She was sophisticated to the last degree and yet retained an aloofness which was impregnable.

Who that ever saw her in her early days can forget the curious impression that her first appearance always created. The surprise, the gasp of disappointment when the audience first caught sight of this oddly dressed, awkward, lounging figure. That Yvette Guilbert, whom every one said was so brilliant, so spirituelle? That long-limbed, awkward creature who did not know what to do with her thin arms? And then, suddenly her whole personality was transformed and became expressive—magnetic. Her face showed an ever-changing picture, illuminating and interpreting her songs—those bitter-gay songs of the life of the un-

derworld of Paris. They were not pretty; they were the songs of those who laugh to hide even from themselves the despair of their own hearts. Some of them were mocking and impudent, as though the singer sang to keep her courage up. Some were careless and ironic. But all of them throbbed with life. They might be full of deviltry, but they were human and made their listeners aware of their vitality.

Later she changed all this. After an absence of some years she came back to us singing songs, still vital and in touch with life, but now it was the life of the French peasant, of simple, religious folk who accept hardship as God's will. These songs were as naïve as the others had been sophisticated. Christmas carols, cradle songs, old ballads of the Saints. But into these too she breathed the breath of life. And such is the power of the soul to mould to its use the body, that the long-limbed, keen-faced singer of the streets seemed to transform

herself into the likeness of the tranquil, sturdy peasant.

In each of her studies she showed that wonderful power of the artist to create for you not only the actual characters and environments of the song itself, but to suggest the relationship of these to life, to the universe—which is the true realism.

It is in these later songs that she is following the true bent of her sympathies and preferences. Keenly as she analyzed the dwellers in the city, it is to the peasant that her heart belongs. She interprets their quiet, toilsome lives with the same breadth and insight as did the great modern Dutch painter, Israels, not spending time on the representation of minute accessories but intent on reproducing the human characteristics and spiritual nature of the originals.

MAGGIE CLINE

CHAPTER III

The Entertainer as a Craftsman

IN spite of differences of personality or of the character they represent for the moment, there are certain technical accomplishments which, consciously or instinctively, are used by every successful artist. We have already spoken of directness and it is hardly necessary to do more than mention lucidity. The speech, however homely, must be absolutely clear and unobscured. It must be equally easy to hear and understand. And the action must be just as concise.

There is another quality, however, of which we become conscious only by degrees. It is the feeling for rhythm—the sense which indicates the exact timing and phrasing and accent which are most expressive. The rhythms vary; some performers command a

large range of them while some employ only a few. With some the rhythm is very marked. One can feel distinctly the phrasing in speech and action. The pause—the movement of the head or hand—the pacing across the stage—we can feel how they are timed and accented. This is especially the case with some of the older school of performers. But it is no less true of the younger, though the effect is less marked; for it is an essential of what is known as the ability to "get it over."

Let us review, then, some of the work of one whose reign as a Vaudeville favorite, though long, shows as yet no sign of waning, and who is past mistress of this art—Maggie Cline.

Of course when any one says "Maggie Cline," everyone else answers "Throw him down, McClusky." And certainly that great and glorious Irish shindy is memorable for its vigor, thoroughness and the rapturous joy of the participants. I never did know what it was all about, but would it be the

genuine article if I did? However, I know that there was a broth of a boy in it who was the cause of himself and everyone else having the time of their lives; that someone was thrown down and among the lot of them they made more noise than was ever before heard outside of Donnybrook Fair. It seems to take every available stage hand to help to make that noise, and "then some." And, when the whole-souled, high-spirited daughter of Erin who was the prime instigator of the shindy brings them all out on to the stage to acknowledge the applause, she treats them as her sons and brothers and cousins and blarneys and chaffs them without mercy, to the huge delight of the audience and her own chuckling amusement.

But this vigorous, rollicking jollity is not the only notable quality of Maggie Cline's work. Let me call your attention to the clean-cut gestures, conveying the greatest possible expression with the least possible exertion; and also to the wonderful timing of these gestures, so that with perfect natu-

ralness they group themselves into phrases, as it were, culminating in an emphasis as rhythmically adjusted as the accented word in a line of poetry.

This is apparent even in the first stepping onto the stage. They know their business so well, these old timers. The implements of their craft are so absolutely under their control that they lose not a single moment in bringing them into play. One might almost say that they begin to influence their audience even before they appear on the stage, and certainly with the first step from the wings the sympathetic current is started.

So Maggie Cline walks on, firm-footed, leisurely, composed. Then she looks out to her audience and smiles, cheerful, friendly and familiar; advances a few steps; then stands, the smile embracing the whole audience and establishing a kinship with it. We know that we are going to like her and we feel sure that she likes us.

The song begins. We hope it is one of the Irish ditties in which she is so truly her-

self, full of unctuous humor and rollicking fun, with eyes a-twinkle at the droll turns and twists of her story, not finically fine, but honest, frank and generous. There is no attempt at smartness in her songs. They deal with plain folk and are expressed in plain words. But watch the exactness of the gesture which suggests rather than attempts to depict: listen to the modulation of the voice which allows the imagination to carry it to a force and intensity not actually attempted. With the squaring of an elbow and the raising of one shoulder she sketches for you in a momentary gesture the Spanish dancer, just as with the fling of a cloak and the uptilt of the chin she portrays the haughty matador. And both are given just the right emphasis and timed to the right moment to keep their place in the rhythm of the song, while still providing the piquancy of a surprise.

Then, once in a while, at a climax she will let go of all restraint and gesture. Voice and action are allowed their full vigor. The

result is dynamic and she seems to glory in it. But these unrestrained moments serve as a contrast, not a contradiction, to her more ordered efforts. It is as though she said, "we are all friends here together and this is just a burst of natural high spirits, quite spontaneous." But, even in these, she knows how to time them so that they shall never seem forced or too long continued. It is evidently inborn, this rhythmic sense, as well as trained by years of experience, but it makes all the difference between effectiveness and ineffectiveness.

Another favorite of an older generation, Fay Templeton, was not in her early days, strictly speaking, of the Vaudeville stage. But I am going to claim her for Vaudeville, since she has made a successful appearance in this field and because she most admirably illustrates the charm of this quality of rhythm.

From the moment of her entrance every action falls into its allotted place, ruled by

LILLIAN RUSSELL

this unfailing sense of rhythm. The music is gay, but her entrance is nonchalant. As we see her to-day, her figure does not lend itself to the exploitation of the modern style of sheath gown, so very wisely she does not count on the latest move as an asset. In fact, she completely defies all laws of "the latest thing," and makes her appearance in garments ample and flowing, but somehow contriving to look very chic.

She has come well onto the stage before she seems to be aware of the applause which greets her. Then her eyes are raised in radiant response, so happy is she that the audience thus welcomes her. A few steps more; then she stops, apparently at random, but really the whole entrance from the first appearance, from the smile to the stop, have completed a perfect phrase. It is not stepped, one, two, one, two, in time to the music, but the phrase harmonizes with it in a way more subtle and far more attractive.

And then she sings: really and truly sings. For Fay Templeton has the trained and de-

veloped voice of a singer. So her songs are not talked or shouted, nor produced in that extraordinary manner which some peculiar tradition has fastened on to Vaudeville. Do you enjoy ragtime? Her songs, it is true, are not ragtime, but watch her movements, even the most ordinary flutter of her handkerchief and you can get from it all the joy of syncopated accent, the accent which goes not with the beat but in a recognized relation to it.

The actual measure of her songs is apt to be simple and well accentuated—a waltz or a two-step. And against this background her rhythmic movement and gesture form a sort of embroidery. I do not say that this is consciously premeditated or counted out; but the rhythmic sense of the artist is developed to such a degree that even the smallest detail, the turn of the head, the glance of the eyes, is adjusted in its time and emphasis in relation to the whole. Meanwhile, the seemingly impromptu asides: the taking of the powder-puff from its hidden recepta-

cle in the parasol handle, the placing or removing of the monocle—these are done with a conscious art and to a nicety of effectiveness which makes them delightful.

But there is something more than technique to admire in Fay Templeton's art. She can, from very simple material, present to us a little human drama made up of a mixture of drollery, pathos and sentiment. See her in "So long Mary," dressed in a plain, sensible walking-suit, such as any business woman might wear, brightened up with a red tie and hat ribbon. Her plump figure radiates good-nature, but her face has a cheerfulness just a little too determined and steadfast to be natural. You feel convinced, somehow, that behind that smile there is a heart as heavy as the clumsy-looking suitcase she is carrying. Yes, she is going away, and she is not so happy about it as she would have you think. And presently six pretty, slender young girls file in, their dresses an elegant counterpart of Mary's plain one. They show quite considerable regret at part-

ing with their older companion and adjure her "Don't forget to come back home," flicking away a regretful tear as they say it. Then they file out and their place is taken by six youths who also show a kindly sorrow at parting with this good-natured comrade. But, after all, the main interest of the young fellows is in the six elegantly dressed girls, and they follow in their train, leaving Mary to struggle with her burdens as best she may. When next we see them each one has linked himself to one or other of the slender young girls and in spite of their kind words Mary is left to trudge alone, still dragging the heavy suitcase and keeping a brave face, grateful for their lightly proffered sympathy.

There is no sigh of self-pity, no look of envy at the young people so engrossed in themselves, but one feels the pathos of it all the same. So when at last a kindly-faced, greyhaired fellow appears and assumes all Mary's burdens and tucks her hand under his arm the burst of applause is a demon-

MARSHALL MONTGOMERY

stration of genuine relief. We had watched the creation of a charming little genre picture that did not need the gush of sentimentality which followed. But audiences sometimes like to smell the orange blossom and hear "they lived happy ever after." It is their tribute to the obvious.

And now I am going to speak of a performance of quite a different character, the effectiveness of which, however, is largely dominated by this same quality, used with so much authority by these other two artists —the quality of rhythm.

Marshal Montgomery is a ventriloquist who has the traditional grotesque doll and goes through much of the quick question and answer that is the stock in trade of his craft. But he introduces a feature which seems to pass beyond the bounds of possibility in that, as he makes his figure talk, volubly, distinctly and continuously, he lights for himself a cigarette, smokes it, leisurely puffing, pours himself out a drink

and unhurriedly imbibes it, and eats, I think, an apple. And the voice of the figure goes on with no apparent regard for what its actual producer is doing.

Now apart from the technicalities of voice production necessary for ventriloquism, which I do not pretend to understand, I became, as I watched this performance, suddenly conscious of another technical medium which the performer employs. He has an absolute command of a dual rhythm, one of which he uses for the figure and the other for his own actions. Much of the illusion is gained by the skill with which he keeps these two rhythms apart and yet manages them so that the pause in one shall coincide with the accent of the other. The rhythm for the doll is jerky and staccato, rude and uncouth, but quite individual. Indeed, it materially helps to invest the creature with a sort of character of its own. That of the manipulator is smooth, leisurely, suave and self-assured. The movement of the hand which pours the drink or lights the cigarette

is steady and unhurried, while the gestures of the doll are flurried and emphatic. But ever and anon during a pause in the chattering monologue of the doll the ventriloquist, using for his own action a different rhythm, takes the required sip or puff. But, because the sip or puff is only part of the whole action, which consists in putting the article to the lips and afterward placing it on the table, whereas the pause in the doll's monologue marks the end of a phrase, the coincidence of the two escapes detection. The exact and conscious timing of the action so as to cause no apparent break in the volubility of the doll's voice is a wonder and delight to watch. This effective use of rhythm, a new one to me, so far from lessening my appreciation of the cleverness of the illusion, increases it a hundredfold.

Though the rhythmic feeling in the technique of the players of the older generation is more marked and its use more conscious, it is quite as much an element in the success of the modern style in spite of the

assumption of spontaniety. Take, for instance, the songs of Ethel Green. Her manner seems quite unpremeditated, even a little tentative and hesitating, as if not quite sure of her relations with her audience. It is not that she is at all uncertain of the humor of her song, but perhaps these people will not see it. When they do and signify their appreciation, she dimples and smiles at them, so glad to have come to a perfect understanding. Don't you feel a sort of rhythm in those softly deprecating glances, and then the gradual dimpling friendliness and finally the arch sauciness of the toss of the head with which her last line is given? There is a nicely maintained balance which works up to a strongly felt moment when the claim of the artist is established with her audience.

Gertrude Barnes, in her story-telling songs, given with such perfect simplicity, knows well how to make her points with no apparent effort. But the simplicity is really the effect of exact phrasing. How effec-

ETHEL GREEN

tively she uses her rag-time syncopations in "Row, row, row." The narrative patters along with no very marked beat but just a subtle swing at the back of it which makes it haunting and melodious. That is the way with much of the modern rhythm. The regular beat is overlaid with a swing which contradicts it but does not lose sight of it. Then back it slips into strongly accented throbs for a space, to be sure that we shall not overlook the fact that, however impromptu and unmeasured the flow may seem, to be effective it must be regulated by some rhythmic sense.

CHAPTER IV

Music and Near-music

WE, of the Vaudeville Audience, all love music. Individually we may differ as to what particular variety of noise we honor with the name of music, but our own brand we, each, love fervently.

In Vaudeville we are offered a gorgeous variety of brands: from melody extracted from the unwilling material of xylophones and musical glasses through the varying offerings of singers and instrumentalists, both comic and serious, to the performance of high class chamber-music or the singing of an operatic diva.

For the purposes of this chapter we will eliminate the singers who use the song simply as a medium to get over to the audience some amusing patter. We have looked at

SOPHYE BARNARD

some of these in other chapters and our Vaudeville sense will not allow us to give too much attention to any one form of amusement. So now let us listen to music as music.

Let it be admitted that the Vaudeville house is not the place in which the musical connoisseur looks for music of the highest rank. There is no aim to compete with the Philharmonic Society or the Boston Symphony Orchestra. But for all that there are some good music and fine musicians and no lack of appreciation for them. Perhaps it is not to be denied that the strange and curious are as highly favored as the artistic; and a violinist may excite as much applause by playing "Suwanee River" on one string as by the most exquisite rendering of a violin Fantasia by Brahms. But there are always some in the audience who are grateful for the best, even if they are not so noisy in their acknowledgment of it. There has been from time to time a large array of talent, musicians of repute, both instrumentalists and

singers, who have found their way on to the Vaudeville stage for a longer or shorter period.

The stars of Musical Comedy and Light Opera drift with apparent indifference from one sphere to the other and sooner or later they are likely to be heard in Vaudeville. In the heyday of her vocal triumphs Lillian Russell sang for a short time in Vaudeville, where her crisp, well-assured individuality and her familiarity with the technique of her craft, quite apart from her well advertised beauty, would always make her welcome.

Quite recently we have heard such acknowledged singers of note as Lulu Glaser, whose popularity in Vaudeville is no less than in Musical Comedy; Grace La Rue; Ina Claire, fresh from her triumphs in "The Quaker Girl"; Kitty Gordon, with her luscious beauty and limpid voice and gowns of startling magnificence; Laura Guerite in a miniature musical comedy, specially written for her; Jefferson d'Angelis, cultivator of

abundant crops of laughter as well as singer of ability, and many more beside.

But while these luminaries flash across the horizon from time to time like splendid comets the constellation of Vaudeville numbers stars of its own which belong to it by right. There is "The East side Caruso," a young Italian whose voice has tones which are not unlike those of the famous tenor; while his ingenuous gratification at the favor he wins is much more charming in its naïveté than the sophistication of the better known artist.

José Collins is a Vaudeville prima-donna who knows the art of voice-production and can render her songs with telling effect. She has dramatic feeling too and identifies herself with their sentiment in the way which her audience looks for. She can melt easily and naturally from one to another of the pictorial poses that have been arranged to accompany her songs. Also, she wears magnificent gowns.

Another favorite is Eunice Vance, who

sings her songs with real musical feeling, while not forgetting the popular appeal which her audience craves.

There is, too, some delightful singing, included in a little drama which presents a real human problem. It is enacted by Sophye Barnard, Lou Anger and Company and is entitled, "The Song of the Heart." It introduces to us a young prima-donna about to make her début in the opera of "Thais." Her husband and family, although opposed to her career, are to witness her triumph from a box. But just as she is prepared to make her first entrance the husband appears, imploring her to come with him to their child who lies at the point of death and is calling for her. The impresario pleads with her. He has helped her through the arduous years of study and begs her not to abandon her purpose now that its achievement is within her grasp. The overture has already begun and the distracted woman is hurried on to the stage. She has sung the first part and returned to

LULU GLASER

her dressing-room to sing the aria offstage before she realizes the agony of her position, but as she again comes before the public her distress unnerves her. She falters, hesitates, her voice breaks and she is unable to proceed. Hisses and hoots from the audience drive her from the stage. Horrified at the cruelty and heartlessness of the public she throws herself into her husband's arms, imploring him to take her back to their child and determining to devote herself to them henceforth.

Sophye Barnard has made a great impression not only with her rendering of the music but also with her acting of the part of the heroine. But it is the singing which gives to the performance its distinction and which remains in the memory as especially enjoyable.

Meanwhile, besides the instrumentalists who delight us with the one instrument of their choice we have versatile artists who play with equal facility any instrument from violin to saxophone. There is Charles F.

Seamon, who seems to be equally familiar with every instrument one can name. Wood, brass, strings,—so long as it is an instrument of music he is its master. Of each he seems to be not only the facile manipulator, but the diviner of its special capability of expression and to be able to wring from it its special quality of vibrant tone.

Not only the acknowledged instruments of the orchestra have their exponents but we have wizards who wring sweetness from accordions, ocarinas or other weird instruments. Unnumbered effects are obtained from the piano by performers who play a different melody with each hand, or change the key every few bars or play complicated settings using one hand only. Or "Violinsky" executes for us the most complicated of exercises on the violin, winding up with a piano-cello duet which he performs alone. The bow of the 'cello is strapped to his right knee while the right hand manipulates the strings as he plays the air on it. The left hand, meanwhile, plays on the piano an elab-

orate accompaniment. Of course we do not look for a great deal of soul in such performances, the exhibition is much more a thing of skill and ingenuity.

There are quartettes and sextettes that play with considerable charm. And because it is necessary to diversify even these varied offerings we find them presenting themselves in fanciful guises, such as gypsies, Spanish peasants and toreadors; or weaving a little pictorial setting around their music as in the representation of the Colonial mansion with its guests keeping up the old tradition of Hallowe'en, whereby the first to speak must blow the Fairy Horn.

I call to mind a group of clever instrumentalists who after playing cornets, trombones and other better known instruments gave an excellent performance on some huge, strange-looking tubas, during which all the lights in the house were extinguished except rings of electric light around the mouths of their instruments. There was something very uncanny in those rings of light emit-

ting deep, full-diapasoned tones, seemingly of their own volition, for the performers were quite invisible.

I don't know that this evident necessity for something over and above the music pleases me. It seems to betoken an inability on the part of the audience to give itself sympathetically to the deeper enjoyment of music and smacks too much of mere restless craving for novelty. It would seem as if the audience will take no step toward the entertainer but must not only be entertained but coaxed into allowing itself to be entertained. In the old days when the singer sat with the audience and was not above sharing a mug of beer with an ardent admirer he might be asked for this or that favorite ditty and the audience joined in the chorus. But it seems that this divorce which has put the footlights permanently between them has cut so deep as to paralyze the desire of the audience to coöperate even mentally with the performer.

And so the audience is losing the full en-

joyment of music because it insists on having it combined with some more obvious form of amusement. The beauty of a song well sung is not really enhanced by being combined with feats of horsemanship nor are we really receiving increased pleasure by mixing the two. There is much to be desired in the sympathetic appreciation of an audience that demands the combination. It is not doing its share.

Therein lies the trouble. The audience is inclined to become inert and to rely on the performer not only for "delight" but for the creation of the mood in which to accept it.

As for joining in a chorus it is seldom that the audience can be induced to make more than a very half-hearted attempt at it. Sometimes, as was very cleverly done by Emma Carus, a singer is "planted" in a remote part of the house who takes up the strain, not too noticeably at first, but just enough to encourage others to join. Gradually this one trained voice overtops all the

rest, who are usually doing little more than hum shamefacedly at best, and then stop to listen to him until he is left singing alone. Of course, with an experienced actress like Miss Carus on the stage, who knows how to work up the interest by the first expression of pleased surprise, followed by the questioning look, the effort to locate the singer, then the confirming approval and at last the congratulatory delight, this is very effective. But, after all, this is only one more effort to capture the audience by novelty and does not really make any demand on their coöperation.

But still, as I have said before, the Vaudeville audience does love music, provided it happens to be of its own peculiar brand. Witness its devotion to the Male Quartette. This particular brand flourishes perpetually in its bald simplicity. And "flourishes" seems a peculiarly appropriate word. For, though I have not been able to substantiate it as a scientific fact, it would seem that Quartette singing has a magical effect in

CHARLES F. SEAMON

increasing the singer's girth, especially toward what might be called the equatorial zone. Occasionally a Quartette will comprise one thin singer and he is the basso profondo. For the rest, the higher the voice the greater the circumference. And Oh! the oozing sentimentality of these fat men! "If you should go away" they will "kneel down and pray." If they do, it seems only too probable that a derrick would have to be rigged in order to raise them to their feet again. Those well padded knees, however, show no signs of abrasions on cold, hard floors. Still, in mellifluous numbers, they regret that they "lost the angel that guides" them when they "lost you!" It is sad, it is heart-breaking! but it does not seem to have worried them to the extent of growing thin about it. Why should they, when they can sing and grow fat?

Perhaps I do them injustice in doubting their agility. Anyhow, they always run quite quickly off the stage. That is one of the regulations,—Run off—Walk on.

Perhaps they would lose breath if they ran on, but I should like to see it tried just once. Perhaps it would break some long cherished tradition and things would never be the same again.

Many of these Quartettes sing sonorously, but others sing stentoriously. I remember one three hundred pound tenor with a voice that could subdue a boiler factory in full blast, standing with his hands hardly meeting across his waistcoat, bawling at us "As a broken heart needs gladness, as the flow-ers nee-ee-eed the deuw, as a ba-by needs its mo-otherrrr—That's how I—need yeou!"

He had quite a wonderful voice. The other three singers had been specially engaged to cope with it and they did their best. But it got away from them and drowned them out and, though they were red in the face with their exertions, they barely escaped from the flood of it.

But there are many Quartettes with which it is quality not quantity that is the ulti-

mate aim and, when this is the case, the offering is one of the most delightful turns that appear on the programme.

Every now and then we find on our programme an item of rare musical distinction. Such is the performance of Theodore Bendix's ensemble players. This Quartette of players contrives very happily to give us real music while not entirely ignoring that personal appeal which their audience craves. Their playing is manifestly for the audience. There is none of the aloofness and impersonality that marks the high gods of Olympus. The players do not disdain to look into the faces of their audience and gain fresh inspiration as they see the answering response to the throb of the elemental stir of their music. They give free play to the temperament and abandon with which the response fills them. Listen to the playing of Sarasate's *Gypsy Fantasy,* by Michael Bernstein and give yourself up to the pulsing beat of life which stirs through the out-of-door world. Feel your blood

tingle with the response to the rise of the sap in springtime, and the song of the first robin and the sound of the wind in the tree-tops and the bursting of buds on the bough and all the sweet sounds of nature which beckon to us from the ages, when our tribe wandered the long road, following the pattern of its people and slept beneath the canopy of stars.

Such organizations, too, as the Russian Balalaika Orchestra, are a genuine pleasure from a purely musical standpoint. They feed the imagination instead of stunting it, and by the charm of their rendering of their characteristic music call up pictures to the mind, fraught with an atmosphere strange and convincing. Hear them play the folk song of the Volga boatmen. At first it is monotonous and heavy, timed to their laborious breathing as they pull their long strokes against the stream. Then it swells into the passionate cry of yearning for some better lot, some longed-for rest from labor. Then once again it settles down into the monoto-

EUNICE VANCE

nous dirge-like chant, dying away in the far distance as the boat disappears up the misty river.

These are the things which weave the real spell of music and lift us for the moment above the commonplace and personal. But they call for a coöperation on the part of the imagination of the hearer. And if a touch of the dramatic in the bearing of the performers can awaken that imagination, we need have no quarrel with it. But sometimes this dramatic bearing usurps the throne which should be occupied by the music itself and we find our audience intent on the peculiarities of the performer instead of yielding themselves to the sway of his music. So, when Francesco Creatore's orchestra plays, fully one-half of his audience are absorbed in watching the antics and eccentricities of the conductor. The wild flap of hair over his forehead, which, as he waves his head in crazy excitement, threatens to blind him—the crouching grasp with which he seems to be plucking a melody from the

atmosphere, or the defiant rage with which he flings it at the performers—the beckoning, the nodding and all the capers in which he indulges, become so engrossing that the actual music passes unheeded. It is true that he can stimulate his audience to a thrilled enthusiasm; yet the spell is not that of music but of his own excitable, effervescent personality.

And while we are speaking of the music we must not forget the Vaudeville orchestra which does such gallant work in augmenting our delight in each and every one of the many turns. It is no light responsibility that rests on the head of the leader of a Vaudeville orchestra and his company of musicians. They can mar if they cannot actually make a turn successful. Notwithstanding a bill that changes completely at least once a week, the leader must be always perfectly familiar with entrances, exits, cues and effects desired by each individual performer. Besides playing for all the song and dances with their special pe-

culiarities of pause or acceleration of the time, supplying accompaniment for instrumentalists, introducing each turn and playing overture and exit march there are many other numbers which look to the orchestra for assistance.

There is the "thrilly" music for the sensational play; the specially accentuated accompaniments to animal acts. Then the acrobats, trapeze and wire acts and other daring feats must have their own particular variety of accompaniment, and the long whirring roll of the drum with its clash of cymbals to mark exactly the climax of some notable feature, and the sudden silence, as though the orchestra itself were too amazed to play for the hair-raising episode which caps the whole performance. Each and every one of these must be timed to the exact second or the effect will be spoiled. Moreover, the leader of the orchestra will often be expected to join in some dialogue with the comedian or to interrupt some specialty, or "fill in," in one way or another, in

the many efforts to bring actor and audience into personal relation.

And—by no means the least of his requirements—the leader of the orchestra must not allow himself the indulgence of looking bored. He may be wearied of hearing the same joke repeated twelve times in a week, the same song with the same emphasis occurring twelve times, the same surprise which he has seen eleven times before, but his face must not betray him. The first violinist or even the drummer, though a person of tremendous importance, may look as they feel. I have even seen them yawn discreetly, but the leader must keep up a semblance of geniality even if inwardly boredom reigns supreme.

His is the position of the commanding officer who marshals the forces in battle, keeping the ranks in line and filling up the gaps made by those who fall. He must observe a tradition like that of the British army, that though the rank and file may lie down under cover, the commanding officer

must remain in full view, bearing the brunt of the enemies' fire with unflinching mien, regardless of praise or blame. We are his debtors, we of the sheltered onlookers who may leave the field, if so inclined, without a spot on our honor. Here is our salute to him and the brave battalion under his command. We dare not refuse it, for have I not said already that we, of the Vaudeville audience, all love music?

CHAPTER V

The Lure of the Dance

THE modern revival of the love of dancing may be said to have shown its first tentative blossoming in this country when, to the wonder and delight of all lovers of the beautiful, Ruth St. Denis made her first appearance on the Vaudeville stage in her Temple Dance of Rhadda. She crept in unheralded, unknown, and it was only by degrees that it was rumored that something new in the world of art was being revealed. For so entirely was her conception that of an artist, so thoroughly had she absorbed the mystical atmosphere of Oriental lore and saturated her presentation in it; moreover, so impersonal and abstract was her performance that it became something more than mere amusement and claimed a place in the category of art.

GERTRUDE HOFFMAN

Not, however, that there was ever any lack of dancers on the Vaudeville stage, but the interest in their work was not very vital, except on occasions when the appearance of such stars as Carmencita fanned to a brief glow the flame of popular enthusiasm. The reign of the waltz, as demonstrated by Letty Lind and Sylvia Grey, had languished. The old fervor of the buck and wing dancers had become mechanical and sophisticated and the ragtime syncopation of the negro music had not yet inspired any more individual expression than the merest imitation of negro antics, hardly worthy to be called dances. Such entertainers as still relied on dancing as their medium of expression received small encouragement, so that with few exceptions they attempted little more than a display of agility and technical accomplishment.

But the appearance of Ruth St. Denis, a native born American who evolved her art, expressive as it is of the spirit of the Orient, in her own country, was followed by the ar-

rival first of Isadora Duncan, an American, it is true, but one who had developed her art in the stimulating atmosphere of Germany. A little later came the two companies of Russian dancers with their finished technique of expressional interpretation, and by this time the claims of the dance had awakened enthusiastic response on all hands, and from being the Cinderella of the arts it has become the admired and fêted pride of popular approval.

Ruth St. Denis, however, remains in a class by herself. No other dancer is attempting to do just the same thing that she does so well. Some of her presentations are less dances than a series of poses of wonderful expressiveness. But the sensitive beauty of her pictorial effects, the exquisite refinements of suggestion which she imparts to the detail and the atmosphere that she thus creates, the result of minute and sympathetic study, have not been rivalled by any other artist on our stage. The great Russian ballets are the refinement by

one artist on the work of another and great masters are proud to associate in the working out of their elaborate creation. And back of them all is a tradition to guide not only the performers but also the audience. But Ruth St. Denis had to create her own traditions, to find and train all her assistants, to amalgamate the work of her musicians and scene painters and incorporate their work with hers into a whole.

When first I heard that the subject of her latest series of dances was to be Japanese I was a little dubious. Had not the Japanese motive been somewhat overdone? But when I saw their presentation I realized that as yet we have but touched the border of poetic suggestion to be gathered from that land of poetry and flowers.

Her appearance in the street scene was not at all that of the conventional "lady on the fan," but had the boldly patterned refinement of the old Japanese prints, with their flowing lines and richly sombre coloring.

How dashing and vigorous, with its free, lithe strides and well poised arms was the spear exercise of the Samurai maiden, and how widely different to the usual conception of the Japanese woman. Here was no timidity or restraint but breezy, joyous exercise of boldness and muscle—woman's deftness and agility were matched with man's strength and skill, and that without fear or favor. Did we think of the Japanese woman as a pretty, submissive toy? Here is a refutation of our theories, for this maiden will be able to take her own part, if physical bravery is ever demanded of her.

And the picture of the Poetess of the Fifteenth Century,—what a true translation of the spirit of poetry and what a vision of other-worldliness it was.

The increasing interest taken in the dance as a medium of expression has encouraged quite a number of dances of symbolic or story-telling intent. There is the "Dance of the Siren," by Joseph Herbert and Lillian Doldsmith, the name of which gives a clue

to its rather obvious story. And there is an allegorical series enacted by Alice Eis and Bert French, entitled "Rouge et Noir," which, also, in spite of a sumptuous setting, is not very imaginative. It represents the worship of the Goddess of Chance by the infatuated gambler. We see her half-crazed victims pelting her with gold, trying to win her smile. One of these she singles out to dazzle with her false caresses, which are but the restless caprice of a heartless, unfeeling coquette. And, of course, when he is drained of gold, energy and courage, the fickle dame turns her back on him and lavishes her smiles elsewhere.

It is all quite literal, easy of comprehension, and makes no demand on its audience beyond that of the most ordinary intelligence. Of course, this is what many people prefer and they have a perfect right to their preference. But that does not forbid an equal right to those who prefer that even their amusement shall call into play their

powers of imagination and stimulate their sense of understanding and beauty.

Sometimes we have a name but no very coherent story or idea given to these dance-offerings, as is the case with Valeska Suratt's "Black Crêpe and Diamonds." The name implied little else but the contrast of a first scene in black and silver and a second in white and spangles, with a loosely threaded series of dances of the vigorous order made popular by the Texas Tommies, with a flavoring of the sensuousness of the Russians. There was, however, some very clever dancing by a tall, slight girl whose individuality of style suggested that some time she might find a medium more suited to her than that particular style of dance.

To Gertrude Hoffmann lovers of the dance owe a debt of gratitude for her enterprise in importing to this country the Russian dance dramas. Her own flexibility of style, which has impelled her to give admirable imitations of the great dancers, also enabled her to imbue herself with their

RUTH ST. DENIS

spirit and hold her own very creditably among this array of highly trained artists. Her plastic mobility is always picturesque, suggesting ideas, which, however, are never quite expressed or grasped.

Irene and Vernon Castle give a character to their dancing in many ways unique. A languid energy, a drooping strenuousness, contradict themselves in a sort of whimsical seriousness. The long, flexible limbs of the man, so agile and yet so listless, his face of impenetrable indifference and abstraction, and the floating gracefulness of the lady give an effect of the movements being made entirely without effort. Somehow it would not surprise you if they left the solid ground and floated off, still dancing, into space.

Among the foremost of our dancing favorites is Bessie Clayton, the sportive, laughing, elfin creature, whose dazzling whirl of energy seems to come from an inexhaustible dynamo of youth and merriment. Her recent dance with a pierrot-like

company was a revel of dainty mischief and frolic, wooing all to join her in a spirit of infectious joy.

The traditions of the Ballet-School have not been allowed entirely to languish. Its graceful pirouettes, entrechats and toe-dancing have been made by La Petite Adelaide a means of imparting charm and fascination to her dances. Mlle. Dazie, also, is one of the few who have preserved vitality in this older form of dancing. She has all the accomplishments of the toe-dancer, the pirouettes and airy flights of the classic ballet; but with them the elusive sprightliness, piquant and varying, which saves them from becoming mechanical or stilted. She uses these devices, not for their own sake, but as graceful phrases of expression.

To Bessie McCoy there clings something of the old charm of the English dancers of Kate Vaughan's school, whose graceful, gliding motions alternate with a careless fling of limbs, head, arms, even eyes and fingers being rhythmically expressive and in

harmony with the dancing motions. There is no very deep appeal in the expressional motive but plenty of simple, naïve charm, used with unabashed consciousness, frankly alluring and not a little saucy.

While this expressional power in dancing is always its most fascinating element, there are occasions when its spell is almost hypnotic in its intensity. There is, for instance, a Hawaiian who dances with a company called Toots Paka Company. He plays some sort of guitar, and he dances. And the wild, furtive, yearning of that dance! You can feel it vibrating, but suppressed and held in check, through every fibre of his body. It is like the creeping motion of a cat, slow, soft, poised, but relentless. A few such creeping steps, and then a stealthy spring. Then still for a moment, but tense and eager. Then creeping again, but faster. Then crouched, expectant, alert and again a leap. And all the while the man laughs, exultant, defiant, with some of the fierceness, if not the cruelty, that belongs to the

cat, while the rippling quiver of anticipation quivers through his supple frame.

A sensuous voluptuousness and wild grace throb through the Dances of the Hungarian sisters whose name has been made pronounceable by the simple expedient of shortening it to "Dolly." They no longer appear together but the offering of Roszcika Dolly and Martin Brown was a strange example of exotic temperament, working on home-made material. For in the dances themselves was nothing very different from the offerings of many other Vaudeville teams and even of some of our ambitious amateurs. But into them the dancer infused a diablerie, a fire and passion, something perfervid for our cooler natures. Unlike most dancers, her expression is rendered less in her feet than in the rest of her body. Head, eyes especially, arms, bust, and hips are used with sensitive expressiveness, but the feet seem wooden and unresponsive.

A study in temperaments, widely diverging, might be made by comparing this ex-

ROSZCIKA DOLLY

otic, over-fragrant blossom with the breezy, friendly insouciance of the original Texas Tommies. With the latter were all the cool daring and gay fearlessness and hearty camaraderie which we love to think is characteristic of the West. Partners are flung or whirled or swung at the most daring of tangents with a good-humored laugh, frank and free from the slightest suggestion of sensuousness. Comrades and friends, though man and woman, they regard each other with trust and candor, and dance and play with the youthful exuberance of children.

And, as their whirlings and swingings have set a pace which it is not easy to follow, we find ingenuity being taxed to find some new manner in which they may be presented, dancing couples taking all the risks of acrobats to accomplish something which will go a little farther than the others. There are two couples—Novita and Billy Lyn, and Hattie Burks and Fred Lorraine, who have come near to exhausting the possibilities in

this direction. In the performances of the latter the lady floats with her feet in space and her arms clasping the neck of her partner or, for a change, her feet clasp his waist while her head is floating at an angle from his whirling body. He flings her across his shoulder or she falls across his arm in an arch to the floor. Or, again, he swings her up over his head as though gravitation had suspended its laws for their benefit. And all this without a loss of the rhythm of the dance, but a suggestion of frolicsome abandon and joyousness which unite the spirit of the dance to that of a gay romp.

Melissa Ten Eyck and Wiley Max have combined these whirlings with pictorial poses, while Arthur Borani and Annie Nevaro, in carrying out their dance, give burlesque imitations of animals, full of character and humorous reality. So variety is introduced by one and another, until it is hard to say where the dance ends and the romp begins.

In pantomime humor we have the Scare-

crow dance of MacMahon, Diamond and Clemence, which blends comedy and dance very cleverly. The grotesque helplessness of the scarecrow, as it suffers itself to be dragged about in the wild capers of one of the dancers, is so sincerely studied that it is some time before you can fully assure yourself that it is in truth anything more than a bundle of rags. Except for the fact that its contortions are always rhythmic, even while most grotesque, there is little clue to its vitality until it is finally revealed.

There is a large array of talent among those who combine with their dancing songs and comedy, as, for instance, Maud Fulton and William Rock, or the Farber Girls. Neither of these teams relies on dancing, though in each case the accomplishment would warrant their doing so. But then one might say the same thing about their comedy. The imitations and burlesques of the former couple are very dashing and laughable, while one of the Farber girls flashes out daring caricatures of dance

movements which have all the diablerie of a grimace.

Comedy and dance combine in the well-characterized stepping of Jo Smith of the Avon Comedy Four. His style is the traditional step-dance, allied to the buck-and-wing. When once he gets started there seems to be no stopping him, and he jigs along, back and forth across the stage, executing one after another of a variety of steps, like a specimen of perpetual motion. His arms hang loose in the traditional manner of the step-dancer, but they are by no means inexpressive. Some slight alteration in the pose of them, and he has imparted a new character to his dance; or a slight gesture, and he has let you into the joke at which he has been smiling all the time his feet clicked out and shuffled their ever changing tattoo.

It is a wide field, this of step and buck-and-wing dancing. Though the genuine negro dances are not very often seen now in their pristine vigor, a few there are, such as

BESSIE CLAYTON

George Primrose and the team of Miller and Lyle, who can give the real old-time shuffle and sway and "shake a laig," with all the nimbleness and loose-jointed gravity of the genuine, old-time roustabout on the levee down the river.

And there are genuine negroes who dance and, once they get down to their real native methods and forget to imitate the tangos and onesteps of the white folk, do good work. George Cooper and William Robinson are two who have lost none of the "handiness with their feet" that belongs to their race. And Phina and her Picks show some mighty fine negro dancing. When those youngsters get a-going with their droll, impish frolics, crouched down, almost to the floor, their legs flying this way and that, their bodies bounding at every impossible angle, and their teeth gleaming in broad, mouth-stretching grins, they are no more to be quelled than a field of grass-hoppers.

Just where dancing ends and romping begins it would be hard to say. There is a

troupe of girls—the Berlin Madcaps is the one I have in mind, though doubtless there are many others—whose gambols, without losing a sort of dancing rhythm, are the essence of romping gaiety, with a flavor of the pony-ballet added. They indulge in the maddest scampers, jumping rope, driving each other like children playing horse, even pushing each other "wheelbarrow" fashion. It is not truly a dance, but a gay, laughing mockery of what the dance may become if agility and activity are untouched by art.

There is material enough for a whole book to be written on the subject of the dance on the Vaudeville stage. For it is so essentially one of the elements of joy and delight, that its mood of the moment must inevitably reflect something of the temper of the age itself. Fortunately, the popular form of dancing in the present revival, in spite of objectionable features, tends, on the whole, away from the sensual or provocative toward the vigorous, the joyous and the stimulating. The frank display of leg

is, as a rule, without coquetry or salaciousness; and, though the old-fashioned may mourn the frankness as robbing femininity of its mystery, it is much more wholesome than the conscious effrontery, inevitable to any such display, when legs are discreetly named limbs and to show even an ankle is considered immoral.

So necessary, however, has agility become that there is a danger of our losing sight of the necessity of beauty. That there should be any great demand for poetic beauty in our dancing entertainments is too much to hope at present. But the dance in itself can claim attention which would be denied to other forms of poetic appeal. And if all who appreciate the charm of the poetic would register their appreciation when dances of poetic beauty are given, we might do more to nurture a truly artistic expression and encourage a taste for the beautiful than by confining our appreciation to exhibitions given for the select few.

At present our Vaudeville audience is in-

clined to be shamefaced about accepting the claim of poetic beauty. Sentiment and prettiness it can readily understand and accept. But there is a solemnity which accompanies true beauty, however joyous its expression. It touches something deep and sacred in us and to find themselves unexpectedly in its presence is, to some people, embarrassing. It is as though we had strayed unintentionally and in our working apparel into the ceremonial court of some great festival. Yet I believe that we all own a festal garment, clad in which we may join unabashed once in a while in some high festival.

VALESKA SURATT

CHAPTER VI

Plays and Sketches

INTO the Vaudeville bill there has crept of late years a new and increasingly important factor. Hardly any bill in the theatre of importance is considered complete unless it includes one of these items. This turn is the one-act play, presented usually by actors from the legitimate stage and often headed by a star of the first magnitude. Authors of the finest talent are devoting their energies to producing these plays and there is no doubt that the influence of the latter will make itself felt on the stage of legitimate drama.

The one-act play was introduced tentatively some years ago. It was not infrequently said that "audiences did not want them," and the taboo epithet of "highbrow"

was muttered against them by some of their opponents. However, they have triumphed even over that and now, since Mme. Sarah Bernhardt has made her successful tour, it cannot be claimed that anything is "too good" for Vaudeville.

Before the introduction of the one-act play Vaudeville audiences were familiar with the sketch, which still holds its place on the boards and has its uses. The sketch differs in motive and construction from the play, being usually a vehicle for the display of the specialty of some particular performer. There is not necessarily any attempt to make a completed story or episode so long as the presentation of the specialty is invested with some extra human interest which sets it forth in a new and attractive manner. A musical specialty, for example, must be introduced, so we find the long lost child brought to the home of her parents in the guise of a strolling singer, and recognized by the singing of some particular air. Hugh McCormick and Grace Wallace, ventrilo-

quists, present a scene at a theatrical agent's in which their dolls play important parts. The humors of a negro impersonator are set forth in a scene between a lazy negro and a super-energetic white lady who would engage him to work on her farm. Or the comic absurdities of knockabout comedians are exploited in a scene of workmen employed to fix a furnace. In all of these it is the specialty which counts, the sketch being simply the medium by which it is presented. Often the sketch completely evaporates when once the specialty is thoroughly under way, and it is not uncommon to see the front drop fall halfway through the act, irrespective of the milieu of the sketch, the rest being finished off in front of it so that the stage may be prepared for the next turn.

In this way the "Avon Comedy Four" play a sketch which starts in a village school to which a new teacher has been appointed. The scholars arrive, and finding the luckless stranger, whose authority has not yet

been proved, they begin to amuse themselves. They sing and dance and play tricks on one another. Soon the attention of the audience is concentrated on the specialties of the different members of the troupe and the schoolhouse idea is forgotten. The front cloth comes down casually. It is one of the stock cloths belonging to the theatre in which they are playing for the week and in all probability represents some street in the locality where the theatre is situated. But that makes no difference. It is the singing and dancing which now claim the attention of the audience, and schoolhouse and teacher are not referred to again.

But the one-act play is a different thing all together. The rules of dramatic construction apply here as in any other drama. Its motive must be set forth consistently and completely. It relies on no stunts to carry it through but must work up to a given climax and present an acceptable dénouement. Naturally, it is a play of a single motive. There is no time to build up an elabo-

rate structure of entangled circumstance and then unweave the web. We must be able to grasp the issue in a few moments. The motive of every character must be simple, there is no opportunity to present a complex study, such as Hedda Gabler, for instance. If local color is needed it must be introduced with a few sharply defined strokes and no time must be wasted on unnecessary dialogue, however epigrammatic it may be in itself.

From this it can be seen that the technique required of both actor and author of a one-act play differs from that demanded in a play of three or more acts. I believe that to accustom oneself, for a time, to getting clear down to the bone of your matter in one slice is not at all an unwholesome discipline. It obliges one to be decisive. The moods and motives of each character must be penetrated with no shirking. One must get the desired impression across the footlights in one stroke. But for an ideal training in dramatic technique this method

must not be followed too long. For it is only by a process of wholesale elimination that such directness can be obtained, and the truth of the study will always depend on how far the author and actor have realized all the intermediary processes which the exigencies of time have not allowed to be shown. So that it must be good for the author or actor to return from time to time to the more elaborate and subtle working out of the longer play, in which every step in the development of his structure must be tested before his audience.

It is only in recent years that the one-act play has had any chance in this country. And yet it seems not at all improbable that it is just this form of drama which is most adapted to the genius of the American people. The qualities necessary to its success are those in which we, as a people, excel. The bold grasp of facts, the somewhat impetuous habit of "jumping right in" to things are national characteristics. Even the tendency to emphasize strongly, to ex-

ARNOLD DALY

aggerate possibly, to go for the main point without greatly troubling about subtleties, have their place in the one-act play; and these are much more native to American ideals than are the finely weighed values and elaborate structure-building of the longer drama. It would, therefore, not greatly surprise me if, when great American Drama comes to be written, it should take the form of the one-act play.

Let us look at some of the plays that have recently appeared in Vaudeville.

A clever little farce by Owen Johnson, entitled *A Comedy for Wives,* is presented by Arnold Daly. It depicts the varying moods of a young husband who has just discovered that his wife has eloped. No sooner has his bachelor friend succeeded in diverting him from suicidal rage to a joyous elation at the prospect of freedom and a trip to Paris, than the wife returns and announces her repentance and resolve to devote herself henceforth to him and to him only. Although there is no attempt to make

of this anything more than a farcical trifle, still it is complete in its dramatic construction and the situations evolve quite logically. Nor is the extravagance of the fun unreasonable in view of the nervous, excitable character depicted.

One of the most delightful little one-act comedies ever written is J. M. Barrie's *Twelve Pound Look,* in which Ethel Barrymore recently appeared. It touches on problems very vital and puzzling, but always with a humor so kindly, so wise and so playful, that it is possible to forget the depths beneath in admiration of the charm of light and shade which plays upon the surface.

There is the pompous, small-minded, self-made man who is to be knighted—ennobled above his fellows for the world's admiration. He is privately practising deportment for the ensuing ceremony of investiture. His cowed and insignificant wife must also be drilled to share the lustre he has conferred on her by making her his partner. His

"impromptu" speech must be typewritten to appear in the papers and a stenographer is to be sent from an agency to do the work. When the girl arrives, smart, buoyant, independent, happy, he recognizes, to his consternation, his divorced wife. He is shocked at her downfall, but puzzled and annoyed at her evident happiness. To satisfy him she agrees to tell why she left him. To his surprise it was not to go to "another." It was to escape his overbearing superiority and win for herself an individuality of her own. She had saved twelve pounds, the price of a typewriter, learned to use it and started out to earn her own way. And as he, gasping and hardly credulous, gazes at her she glances at the shrinking, subjugated second wife and warns him to treat her kindly and to beware of the twelve pound look in her eyes—the sign that she longs for a means of escape.

Ethel Barrymore has never appeared to greater advantage than she does as this independent, radiant, breezy woman, who has

won out in her own battle and who looks at the man who has never understood her and who never will with just a little wistfulness mixed with her relief from his oppression. He is not a bad fellow and she would have liked to make him see, but she knows him to be incurably blind.

It is a play which makes plenty of demand on the audience, for it holds more in it than the mere facts related in actual words. It is a piece of modern life in touch with modern feeling. It hits hard at the snobbishness and selfishness of this self-complacent benefactor, whose sole motive in life is his own glory and its enhancement. But at the same time the story is told with such simple, humorous clearness that it amuses even those who do not care to penetrate below the surface.

Kathryn Kidder is another actress whose talents put her in the very front rank of artists of to-day. She has been admirably fitted with a part written by her husband, Louis Kaufman Anspacher, embodying the

ETHEL BARRYMORE

character of Mme. Sans Gêne, in which character she made one of her greatest hits on the legitimate stage. The sparkling little comedietta deals with the compelling personality of Napoleon and appeals strongly to that element of romance and hero worship ever to be found in audiences. The shrewd, plain-spoken washerwoman-duchess outwits the suspicions of the Little Corporal and finally convinces him of the innocence of an apparently intriguing adventure which has been fastened on a young officer by enemies of the Empress.

The story is so full of color and reality that I find myself wondering whether part of the lukewarmness to the drama about which managers complain may not have its root in the modern desire to condense. We are asked to sit through four acts when the fare provided is just about enough for one, according to our present day rate of living. At all events, here is a little comedy, the material of which might easily have been stretched out to a whole evening, but which

is condensed into a short half-hour, during which we are amused and interested every moment. We should not have enjoyed it any more if we had spent the whole evening at it, and possibly physical weariness would have robbed us of our zest. As it is we can enjoy to the full this one little gem and as much or little of the other turns as we please without being required to pay for our mental refreshment with physical weariness.

That comedy is not the only offering acceptable is proved by Nance O'Neil's selection of *The Worth of a Man*. A grim little tragedy, wrought out in narrow, toilsome lives, it is acted with a sincerity that blinks none of its gloom. A convict returns to his home to realize that he has lost his place among men and that even with his wife another has supplanted him. The wife tries to conceal her breach of faith and the supplanter sacrifices his life to make atonement for the wrong he has done. But all is unavailing; nothing can restore to the outcast

his sense of recognition as a man and the tragedy ends in bitterness and doom.

Melodrama of the popular crook type finds its exponents in Taylor Granville and Laura Pierpont. Their play, *The System,* calls for three scenes and a lengthy cast to present its lurid happenings. Of its kind it is a well concocted series of thrills, running smoothly and plausibly with not too great a strain on the possibilities. The story is admirably handled, so that the characters, whether that of the persecuted crook or the persecuting policemen, appear human and convincing. And it is very evident that the audience, as a whole, thoroughly enjoys it, perhaps because it is sufficiently like a slice of life to appeal to their curiosity. For the craving to see how the other half lives and thinks is undoubtedly a strong factor in the present love of crook plays.

Drama, strong and poignant, is offered by Blanche Walsh in *The Countess Nadine.* The story, as the name suggests, deals with Russia, and the plots and counterplots of

spies of the police. There is little opportunity in it for the comedy in which Blanche Walsh is so charming, but its gripping intensity gives her ample scope for earnest, vigorous emotion.

And how shall we speak of that brightest of all stars of the theatrical firmament who has lately flashed across the Vaudeville stage, Sarah Bernhardt? A tribute of homage is the least that can be rendered and this has already been paid throughout the length and breadth of the land. For she has not brought to Vaudeville the threadbare remnants of her art, but has mastered a new and wonderful technique, built on years of experience and animated by an art which age cannot touch. She has recognized the limitations imposed on her by increasing years and met them and obliterated them by the force of her genius.

They tell a story of her, the truth of which I cannot vouch for, which seems so illustrative of her indomitable spirit that it gives a clue to her triumph. While kneel-

ing before the Altar in the play *Jeanne d'Arc,* her knee was pierced by a nail. She gave no sign of her agony until the performance was over nor was the severity of the wound recognized until blood poisoning had set in. For a while her condition was so serious that it seemed that it would be necessary to amputate the leg. Her attendants tried to conceal from her their anxiety, but by accident she one day overheard some words which revealed to her the terrible possibility. She realized to the full that it meant the end of her career as an actress. But not for one moment did she think of it as the end of her career as an artist. She still had her wonderful expressional gift which has ever belonged to her public nor would she allow it to be wasted on account of any infirmity of her own. She immediately set herself to planning how best she could use it in the event of becoming a cripple. Before her attendants knew that she was aware of her danger she had in her mind designed a little carriage in which she

might be drawn on to the stage and from which she might recite and interpret those plays in which she has thrilled the world. Over her, as she lay, should be strewed roses, which might fall around her path as she was moved.

It is in just this spirit that she has faced the limitations imposed by increasing age. She acknowledges that she can no longer pace with panther-like grace across the stage. So she stands, hardly moving from one place, or even sits through long acts. But she does not allow this fact to decrease the expression of restless, nervous energy that she would convey. We are made to feel it burning through her whole frame. It flashes from her eyes and vibrates through the tensely held body and beautiful, sensitive hands.

It is undeniable that her voice shows signs of wear. No longer can she flute continuously on those notes of gold. But she reserves them for the one passage where they will melt the very soul. And, for the rest,

NANCE O'NEIL

it is so informed with sincerity of feeling that it arouses a response to every shade of emotion expressed.

This is indeed a new and wonderful technique in which ardor of soul has taken the place of physical energy. With this she still sounds the richest and most varied chords in the orchestra of emotion and paints pictures glowing with vitality and color or holds the senses in a still intensity of elation.

I think one part of her fancy has fulfilled itself: for the roses dropping from her abundant store make beautiful every place over which the chariot of her art passes.

I saw her first in the heyday of her prime, when expression pulsed through every motion of her lithe, perfectly trained body, and I hailed her as a wonderful actress. I see her now when the fire of her genius flames through the frailties of a body not strong enough to contain its lustre, and I hail her as a wonderful artist.

Meanwhile, although the recent appearance of Sarah Bernhardt was undoubtedly the event of that dramatic season, it may as well be acknowledged that it was not to the ordinary habitué of the Vaudeville that she most strongly appealed.

Of the crowds who thronged the theatre and were turned away from the door at every performance a very large part were people to whom Vaudeville was an unexplored field. This might be taken as a proof that in it there is something for every one if he will but look for it; and it is not impossible that one of the results of her visit may be a strong inducement to provide attractions for the hitherto unreached public. To keep up the standard set by the engagement of Sarah Bernhardt would, of course, be impossible; for her name stands alone and is a household word throughout the civilized world. Nor can it be denied that just on that account many have come to see, not the artist, but the celebrity; for there is, unfortunately, a large public whose curi-

osity is stronger than its appreciation of art. But in spite of this let us hope that the fact that lovers of the very best can be brought to Vaudeville is now thoroughly impressed on the minds of those who provide our entertainment. If it is we shall undoubtedly reap the benefit.

But when all is said and done the ultimate result rests with the public. If it will continue to seek out the best and give it support, not only when guided by a historic name but wherever a worthy occasion occurs, we know that there is ambition enough among the managers to supply whatever demand is made.

CHAPTER VII

Versatile Mimics and Proteans

THE imitative faculty is so inherent in the human race that the limits of its influence are difficult to appreciate. The child absorbs many of its attributes, physical, mental and moral, by force of imitation, either conscious or unconscious. It imitates, not only what it admires, but even what it dreads; the doctor, the policeman, the burglar, no less than the president, the cowboy, the "grand lady" or the fairy queen.

Some of us grow out of our habit of imitation, but many more do not. Some of us continue to be unconscious of it, but retain it just as strongly. We have all known people whose imitation of those they admire is laughably apparent; whose "best friend" of the moment can be recognized in the poses,

CECELIA LOFTUS

gestures, mannerisms, tones of voice, which they themselves reproduce for the time being.

Did you ever look into the faces of an audience and catch sight of one in which the expressions of the actors on the stage was mirrored, one after another, with no consciousness on the part of the face's owner? It would seem as though such a face must be a sort of sensitized plate, obliged to reproduce whatever came within the angle of its vision.

It is this quality of translating by his own body, voice and actions, the impressions received, just as the action of the light on the sensitized plate translates the objects before it, which is the medium of expression of the imitator. With him, however, the action is not unconscious, but studied as carefully as an artistic photographer studies his subject in order to bring out the salient points. And when every characteristic has been absorbed, the imitator must be able to add to the reproduction the feeling of the

original. For the time being he must feel like the subject that he is portraying and he must be able to impress this feeling on his audience.

Just as the photographer, by focus and arrangement of light and by careful handling, can influence the result of his photograph, so the imitator, by diversifying his methods, may give us the result in differing ways, each way being none the less a true imitation. He may give us a straight portrait—a more or less exact imitation of the subject with only such emphasis placed on the individual peculiarities as shall help us to recognize the original. Or he may present a caricature in which the peculiarities are exaggerated and minor details eliminated and only the salient features selected. Or it may be a burlesque that he shows us in which only the peculiarities are shown, the rest being grotesque additions.

When we speak of imitators, two or three names stand out in every mind, notably those of Cecilia Loftus and Elsie Janis. It is

some years since the latter appeared in Vaudeville, but her work in this medium is still distinctly on the order of Vaudeville, so we make no apology for mentioning it in this connection.

Cecilia Loftus, known wherever the English language is spoken as Cissy Loftus, is a dainty Chelsea china-shepherdess, endowed by some elfin sprite with a sense of humor. The combination is irresistible. For a Chelsea china-shepherdess might with perfect justification be content to be dainty and pretty and coquettish and quite vapid. But when her eyes can twinkle and her cheeks dimple and with a quaint twist her mouth can utter roguish little sarcasms with perfect good humor, the effect is piquant and surprising. And when before your very eyes the Chelsea china-shepherdess transforms herself into one after another differing personalities, all of whom you have met before, you find yourself marvelling. And the transformation is not only in broad outlines but in details of personality. Watch

the nervous rigidity of her figure, the angle of the knee, as she impersonates Mrs. Fiske. Listen to the metallic tensity of the voice. Then see her melt into the soft, diaphanous personality of Maude Allen, all lissomness and pliability. Hear the sobbing monotone of her voice and note the nervous languor of her movements, as she portrays Jane Cowl, and contrast them with the clean-cut rhythmic movement of her Sarah Bernhardt. How entirely she gives herself up to each succeeding portrait! For the time being there is nothing left of her own individuality. It is a portrait, presenting details of manner, pose and figure with every feature and foible peculiar to them.

In some of her monologues, however, Miss Loftus shows that she is no stranger to the art of caricature. Her complacent young mother, travelling in a motor-bus with her small boy, emphasizes with just the right touch of exaggeration the stoical indifference, not devoid of self-consciousness, with which she incommodes her fel-

low-passengers. Alternately she reproves and encourages the child to "show off," lingers over her final alighting and exhausts the patience of everyone, yourself included. And then the twinkle of the merry eyes and the dimples of the Chelsea china-shepherdess flash out again and you realize how completely you lost her in the caricature of the other woman.

I do not speak of Cissy Loftus's imitation of Nazimova, because it is a comparatively easy thing to do. The peculiarities of the latter are so marked and her accentuation of them so obvious, that at times she seems to be caricaturing herself. She is imitated by nearly every impersonator. I have seen an amateur, and a man at that, give an imitation of her so convincing, that it conjured up the very image of her to one's mind's eye. On the Vaudeville stage among the best that I have seen is Violet Dare's satire on "Bella Donna"—a creepy, spidery creature, in a grey-silver, clinging garment, with close-bound hair, with slithery furtive

walk and sensuous writhing body and voice purring and lisping in tones obviously artificial. It is a trifle over elaborated, but the subject was a tempting one and not very hard to present.

Elsie Janis is, again, the portrait-painter. Ethel Barrymore she does to the life—the matured Ethel Barrymore with her warmer, more human characteristics. And Laurette Taylor! It would surely be weird to have the two of them together, for little Peg o' my Heart would be thinkin' it was her own double she saw and mightn't that be unlucky, now?

How delightfully mischievous Elsie Janis is when she pushes back her hair, and with the ingenuousness of a schoolgirl—and she isn't much more, after all,—imitates Fred Stone, with whom she is acting. Of course this time it is a caricature, but it is done with the effect of spontaneity, giving the impression that she has never even attempted it before, which is very piquant. There are other things which she can do besides imi-

MARSHALL WILDER

tations, and I expect to see her succeed in things which as yet she has not attempted. For it is a great thing to be young and still growing, and still greater to have made a success but not lost the ambition to grow.

So far we have spoken only of imitators who rely entirely upon their power to infuse into their own persons the peculiarities and individualities of their subjects. But there is a large class of impersonators who rely for their effects largely on elaborate noses, wigs and even cheeks and chins. These are wonders of skill in their composition and are manipulated before your very eyes, so that in a minute, by carefully planned movements, the performer and his attendant have transformed the outward semblance of the man from Napoleon to Lincoln, or from Henry Irving to Theodore Roosevelt. One of these, Lamberti, adds to the imitations of several musicians a skilful performance on the instrument most affected by the original.

Cæsar Rivoli, too, impersonates in this

way ten famous musical composers, conducting in the orchestra fragments of their compositions and stooping down for one moment behind the conductor's desk to effect his transformations. It is true that, in the matter of make-up, the triumph belongs in great part to the wig-maker; but no efficiency expert has ever excelled the economy of movement that is employed by these impersonators in their rapid changes.

In the gay little sketch which is Rivoli's chief offering and in which he takes the parts successively of seven different characters, it is again more the rapid change of make-up and costume which commands admiration. For in every one we can but recognize the voluble exuberance of Rivoli himself. He is bubbling with an excitability truly Latin, when he appears as his own prologue, and he bubbles in varying keys in each of the characters that he portrays with the same vivacity and exuberance.

For impersonality and disassociation from the characters he assumes, the work of Owen

McGiveney in his personifications of five characters from Dickens's *Oliver Twist* is quite remarkable. In his prologue he stands before us, a quiet, self-contained young man, rather retiring in manner, with no assumption of forcefulness, giving one the impression of a student rather than an entertainer. Dressed in ordinary evening clothes, he gives a résumé of the play in which he is about to appear, and as he retires, almost before you realize that he is off, there rushes on, in his costume of a man-about-town of the period of 1860, Monks, the nervous plotting, flushed-faced step-brother of the hounded little Oliver. He bursts into the wretched garret of Fagin to warn his accomplice that one of his wretched gang, Nancy, has betrayed them.

He fumes through the empty room with hurried footsteps, and finding no one to whom to tell his tale, departs. The door has not closed behind him before the curtains of the bunkbed part and the hob-nail boot of Bill Sykes appears and that husky bully

heaves himself lumberingly into sight, burly, beetle-browed, slow of speech and movement but dogged, fierce, persistent. He burns for drink to slake the fever caused by his last night's carouse, and finding none in its accustomed place, with a curse at the negligence of Nancy, lurches off to get it. Then, while the clump of his boots dies away down the stairs, Nancy slips into the room, faltering, afraid, hesitating. Browbeaten and cowed as she is, she still cares for the comfort of her brutal lover, though disgust at his cruelty and savageness has determined her to save Oliver from the clutches of the wicked crew. She knows well enough that death awaits her if they learn of her design and knows too whose will be the hand to deal it. But her instinct leads her still to minister to this brute whom she has made her master and serve him humbly as heretofore in spite of the fear and repulsion stirring in her heart. She goes out and Fagin, the master mind of this band of rogues, enters; so instantaneously, that one almost

conceives of them being both on the stage together.

There are many ingenious technical tricks for holding our attention on the disappearing actor for a moment or two before his reappearance in the next character at another entrance. The skirt of the dress is caught in the doorway—a hand still holds the door jam—the walking stick still protrudes for a little while, or the voice is still heard finishing the sentence—so that our imagination holds the presence of the character which has disappeared and the reappearance of the actor under another guise, with a voice changed not only in key but in intonation, quality and utterance, seems hardly less than magical.

And so the grim little drama is played out until the sickening blows and moans are heard which tell of the murder of Nancy by her brutal mate while Fagin listens, cowering and yet exultant. One other character is added to the list, that of the "artful Dodger," pert, callous, depraved, but light-

hearted and philosophical, a character distinct from the others and as forcibly rendered. For each one is thought out in every minute detail of movement, pose and utterance, with a keen study of how best to stimulate the imagination of the audience so as to invest each character with a permanence and position with regard to the others and the working out of the story of the drama.

It is a fascinating exhibition and Owen McGiveney has brought to it no small amount of intellectual and psychological insight. It is a pity, however, that he has not called to his aid a writer of dialogue with the literary ability to give characteristic form to the utterances of the various personalities. The turn of their sentences, the choice of words and phrases, should have quite as much character as the sound of the voice or the action of the body, whereas at present, except in such sentences as are taken directly from the original book, the dialogue is monotonous and flat, compared with the variety and individuality of the action.

KATHLEEN CLIFFORD

There are many more pictures being shown in this great photographic gallery of Vaudeville. Some are fanciful and humorous, some are grave and actual, but all are the records of sensitized minds, displayed through the medium of a plastic and responsive body.

Though he possesses many of the qualifications of the actor, there is enough difference in the requirements of an imitator to make it by no means certain that the latter would necessarily be a great actor. For one thing, this presentation of the instantaneous picture is different from the gradual building up and unfolding of a sustained character, and the very ability to concentrate the qualities and characteristics in a flashlight presentation will probably counteract the slower and more gradual development, needed in the structure of a completed character in a play.

We might go even further and say that in some respects the technique of the actor and that of the imitator are entirely oppo-

site, the one to the other. The conscientious actor, if he is allowed to approach his work as an artist, will study the environment, tendencies, temperament, motives and mood of the character he is to represent, as well as the circumstances leading to his action.

Then, having mastered all of these in such a manner as to be able by the power of his imagination to feel them emotionally, he will discover by what means they would naturally display themselves. He must then go a step further and study how to heighten their display, so that the audience shall be able to interpret the emotions, prompting these actions, without any appearance of behavior beyond the normal and human. Thus, his gestures and the character of them, the tones of his voice, his movements and carriage, are moulded from within.

The imitator, however, begins at the other end. With him it is the gesture first and the character of it, and from that back to what prompted it. There is no need to probe back very far into tendency, and motive, any

more than the maker of the plaster cast of the "Unknown Lady" need analyze the meaning of her inscrutable smile. But the Florentine artist who created it must have lived with its mystery burning in his brain and heart for many a long day before he fixed its cold, sweet cruelty in the marble to live through the ages.

This failure of the imitator to do creative work was shown very plainly in the attempt of one of these impersonators to fill out the scene of the death of Svengali, the villain of Du Maurier's sensational success, *Trilby*.

In the touch and go of his previous impersonations he had given us character and dramatic action. But when it came to the full scene there was no power to give structural form to the conception. The interest was not built up, step by step, to a climax. The first stagger and clutch at his heart of the dying man was as full of horror as his final death. All his intermediate writhings added nothing either of character exposition

or dramatic intensity. The interest of the audience, instead of increasing, was allowed to relax. The artist could give us an admirable snapshot, but could not elaborate a finished picture.

MARIE LLOYD

CHAPTER VIII

Some English Visitors

THE theatre, like all the arts, cannot help being more or less a reflection of the manners and morals of its age and country. And this is no less true of the Vaudeville or variety entertainment, thought in a different way. For we do not look there for an exact representation of the way in which people think or act, or even dress, but we do see what are the things which they think amusing, what it is which touches their sentimentality, the things which seem to them enviable, and what they regard as "fun."

In a previous chapter I have spoken of the change from the old English Music Hall, catering only to the amusement of men, to the present style of "Refined Vaudeville." This development has necessarily

brought corresponding changes in the brand of entertainment offered for the delight of this different audience. To trace this gradual change let us look at the differences of method and manner of a few English visitors, the dates of whose visits cover the time allotted to a generation, while their knowledge of stage life extends even further back than that. They are all still with us at the present time of writing, and, in spite of changes of taste there is so much that is genuinely exhilarating in their turns that they still minister to our delight.

Many of the present generation of vaudeville goers will not remember the first appearance of Marie Lloyd in this country. She belongs in temper and time to a day which in this country is quickly passing, but she has her place firmly rooted in the hearts of her countrymen. For Marie Lloyd is the personification of the spirit of the old English Music Hall. She has really no place in "Refined Vaudeville." She belongs to the era of beef and beer and loud laugh-

ter and broad winks. But beef and beer are not unwholesome, and a roar of hearty laughter is ever so much better than a snicker and a broad wink. Well, when the wink is as cheerful and wholehearted and unconcerned as Marie Lloyd's there is not much harm in a wink.

It is quite impossible to acquit Marie Lloyd of vulgarity; but it is a straightforward, hearty, spontaneous vulgarity, that smacks more of the primitive frankness of an untutored child of nature than the sophisticated salaciousness of the cosmopolitan. Yet there is no denying that the romping fun of this boisterous coster-girl, her loud, frank laugh, her jokes of more than dubious intent, and that impudent wink, may prove disturbing to a generation whose manners, if not their morals, are less robust than hers. We do not openly encourage that type. There are no coster-girls among us. Our factory girls may be occasionally bold and not too modest, but they will have you know that they are "puffeck ladies," even if

they are a bit flirtatious and giggling in their demeanor. Marie Lloyd never makes any pretence of being a "puffeck lady." She knows no harm in her frank utterances, and sees no reason for anybody being shocked.

So, when she sees anything which strikes her as humorous, she mentions it with the innocence of a child. But, in a polite assemblage such a child is an "enfant terrible," and any attempt to assuage her plain speaking would only result in confusion worse confounded. But one does not greatly deplore the conduct of a naughty child, and most of us can laugh at its *bêtisses.*

One of her songs—I do not know if she has sung it here—is about a girl who by a series of accidents found her way into the harem of the Sultan. She sang it dressed in a weird mixture of Turkish trousers and coster-girl hat and feather, and accompanied it with a parody of an Oriental dance, boisterously and irresistibly funny. With rollicking heartiness it described how she "left

the Sultan sitting on his throne and came straight home to Bill." And this is just what she has done. She has kept away from the luscious, the sensual, the seductive, and jests merrily with full-blooded human facts of life in the spirit of good-humored simplicity and raillery.

Nor must it be forgotten that she represents a type fast disappearing. But in their heyday the real Cockney of Cockaigne, untrammelled by the era of "improvements," recognized him or herself as being wholly different from but by no means inferior to the "toffs"—those lofty creatures of culture and decorum. The Cockney had his own code of morals and manners, and a few lurid phrases were not incompatible with it. The responsibilities of life weighed lightly on their shoulders. Care is not induced by what we have to do without, but by what we unavailingly crave. So poverty is not humiliating when you are as well off as your fellows, and ignorance is no matter for shame if you know as much as they. So

they lived, a law unto themselves in their kingdom of Cockaigne.

Once accept these facts and Marie Lloyd's broad comedy is as natural as the frolicking of a young colt in springtime. Just because the world is young and she is full of gaiety and high spirits, up go her heels into the air, no matter what convention they kick down. And the world is young, and so is she, and so are all of us—when we are happy. For youth is largely a matter of feeling, and fortunately it is contagious, and there is no one who can spread the contagion faster than Marie Lloyd.

No less brilliant, and perhaps more in accord with modern ideals, is her sister, Alice Lloyd. Here again we see the easy authority of the artist who has thoroughly mastered the technique of her craft. As such, she feels instinctively the response of her audience, and can play upon it and foster it for its own more abundant delight, as the laughing water mirrors back the sunshine. Vesta Tilley must have spent pretty

VESTA VICTORIA

nearly half of her life dressed in masculine garments, her actions parodying those of the lords of creation, while her mind has been quizzing and mocking them with a kindly, humorous philosophy.

I believe she was about five years old when she made her début at Birmingham, England, in a burlesque of the then famous tenor, Sims Reeves. Adorned with a silky black moustache and clad in a tiny dress suit, the little tot sang with exaggerated fervor the sentimental ballads about "My Pretty Jane" and the "Pilgrim of Love" and all the other objects of idolatry in vogue at that time.

And since then she has continued to parody the youth of the opposite sex. She is the laughing critic of their foibles and weaknesses and remains always as young as they. I should not like to count up how many years it is since I first saw her the "principal boy" at a pantomime, and a very dainty little fairy prince she was, too. But it was not long before she discarded the doublet and

hose, and reappeared as the modern "chappie" in evening dress, topper, walking stick and monocle. Then, as usual, she told us of her escapades and her sage reflections thereon. And this she has been doing from that time to the present, sketching for our delight a gallery of characters, including the happy youth of the day, in every variety of type—soldier, sailor, schoolboy, clerk, and, her favorite of all, the young fellow about town. In every one she has studied her subject and entered into his feelings and shared his views and knows his world.

Her "Tommy Atkins" is a gay, careless dog, very sure of his fatal effect on feminine hearts. Very smart and conscious of his well-set-up figure, he cocks his head and swaggers saucily, his tiny feet strutting precisely to the music. He twirls his little cane, or, using it as a sword, lunges desperately, then sheathes it in his left hand as he stands at "Attention." Or he marches stiffly, a huge cigar tipped at a surprising angle between his lips, puffing like a steam engine,

chest protruding, but with a beam of satisfaction spread over his face, and his eyes turning to watch the stunning effect on all beholders.

Then there is a captivating midshipman, who dances such a hornpipe as sets the pulses tripping to its measure. No leaf in the wind ever floated across the ground more lightly than this swaying, bending, fluttering figure, with the precise tap-tapping feet and eyes dancing as merrily as music. She is an adorable sailor-boy, not, perhaps so fully characterized as some of the other types, but loveable and winning.

There is the cheap young clerk, enjoying the splendor of his summer holiday, and the gorgeous raiment he has provided for its celebration. He has toiled and saved that he may loll on the Brighton promenade in the guise of a young aristocrat and impress passers-by with the enviableness of his lot. And here Vesta Tilley brings out just a little hint of pathos in the poor fellow, not by any direct statement, but by his heartfelt so-

licitude that not an item of the apparel which he has purchased at such sacrifice shall be missed, and his grim determination to enjoy every minute of his poor, short week. There is an irony here, something more subtle than mere impersonation, for it interprets as well as satirizes.

But, after all, the character by which she is best known is her London Chappie, light-hearted, rollicking, insolent, complacent. He is a little too apt to be tipsy, and then he is not so pleasant; but, when he is just out for a lark, he is irresistible. His shrewd wisdom, the result of his profound experience, is delicious, and his gaiety delightfully infectious.

There is no artist on the stage to-day who is more closely in sympathy with the audience than Vesta Tilley. She can play with it, mould it, keep it in suspense, until you begin to fear that her action is too slow, then suddenly she snaps out a climax with a rattle and verve that sweep all before it. And it is done with a conscious love of the artistry

ALICE LLOYD

of it. In a curious way the very groundwork of her success in depicting these masculine types lies in the femininity of her personality. She is not mannish, and her point of view is not that of the man, though she has an understanding of it. She stands apart and views her types with a detachment that can appreciate the values in them better than if she approached them from a more personal standpoint. She is critic and apologist, interpreter and mocker, all in one. Withal she remains eternally youthful, cheerful and sincere.

Vesta Victoria is quite as old as her mother, Vesta Tilley, and has no trace of the saucy swagger that characterizes that gentlemanly young fellow. She is one of the blonde, soft, slow-moving English women, and scores her points by seeming not to see them. The extreme simplicity of her poor, rag-bag-looking bride, in her song, "Waiting at the Church," gives a keynote to her whole method. She just does not un-

derstand, and is looking to you to explain it all to her. Even the peculiarly explicit note from the bridegroom-expectant, giving as his reason for not appearing "my wife won't let me," doesn't seem to convince her of the true state of things. Her pellucid, bell-like voice, with just a suspicion of throatiness in it, is as questioning as that of a child who has not quite decided whether to laugh or cry. There is no conscious use of any of the technical tricks, of pauses, of glances at the audience, or gestures or asides. The whole story is poured out in very simple words, in a manner naïve and unstudied, at times almost querulous and with absolutely no hint at appreciation of any humor in it. This same simplicity is the mark of another song about a country woman, left wandering in the streets with her baby while her husband is hunting a lodging for her. The story is told with almost stolid straightforwardness, which is humorous in its completeness. "Poor old me, I haven't any key and

I don't know where I live." Could anything be simpler?

I don't know if Vesta Victoria is versatile. I have only seen her in this one performance, when her characteristics appeared so definite and clear-cut that it hardly seemed possible they should vary. True she had one romping song, describing a disastrous horseback ride in which the descriptions were a little more energetic than in the others. But there was the same direct unconscious simplicity, with evidently no intention to be funny. She is, in fact, quite sorry for herself; but there is not a bit of tragedy in her sorrow. You feel assured that it would take very little to make her dry her eyes and forget her troubles. I think that is one of the reasons of her popularity. Troubles seem such simple affairs as told by her. She appeals to our sense of superiority. We know we could straighten matters out for her and manage her business to perfection, and she, poor little thing, seems to know it too. She tells the

tale of the sad muddle she makes of everything and we see the humorous side of it, which she seems to have missed and again our sense of superiority is tickled.

Only afterward do we realize how completely she has convinced us by the force of her appeal and then we recognize the art of it. She has reckoned on a certain quality in our mental makeup and results have proved the wisdom of her calculation.

One of the latest of our English visitors is Ada Reeve, and a contrast of her methods with those of Marie Lloyd marks how far Vaudeville has travelled from the old Music Hall.

One of the first impressions one gets of her is that of a well conducted young person who, from her demure demeanor, might be the governess in a nobleman's family. Her blond hair is parted and brushed simply back from a face tanned by out-of-door life. Her almost quakerish gray dress, with its pretty lace collar, has nothing striking or extravagant about it and is long enough

KITTY GORDON

and wide enough to conceal her neat little feet and ankles. Her manner is hesitating and friendly and studiously ladylike.

Then she sings; and her songs show that in spite of studied deportment this young lady has leanings toward life that are not included in the curriculum of the schoolroom. For her songs are mostly concerned with more or less clandestine love affairs carried on under the nose of authority. And they are sung with a relish instead of disapprobation. Sometimes she dances, neatly and deftly, with an odd little mixture of demureness and liveliness.

Then comes the singing of "Do, Sue, do," which is accompanied by an extraordinary wriggle of head and chest. It is a masterpiece of grotesqueness, wholly gratuitous, for the contortions have absolutely no bearing on the subject of the song. It takes the audience by surprise, with its audacity that is so entirely unlooked for.

It is the climax of the surprise which commenced with the twinkle of the eyes

when the first line of the first song revealed its equivocal situation. It is worked up very neatly and skilfully, at no time forced. Even the grotesque wriggle is done with an exuberance that makes it seem spontaneous and natural. One feels that there is plenty of reserve behind it. The limit has not been attempted, even if frolic did become a little daring. And at the close of the performance the little grey-clad figure drops back into ladylike demeanor just as correctly as if she had never shown the unconventional humors which were concealed by the mask of decorum.

This is in itself a little satire on human nature. There is piquancy in the surprise of finding the lurking little devil peeping from an unexpected corner. But how widely it differs from the wild fling of spirits, the rollicking jollity of Marie Lloyd. In reality it is not a bit less of the earth earthy. But it is not the sport of the untutored child of nature. No! It is an "educated" little devil. Its speech and manners have gone

through the "grammar grades" at least. It knows there are solecisms unpermissible; but it hasn't paid much heed to its lessons and is not very sure what they are. Yet it is careful—so careful that we cannot fail to notice every lapse.

One other impression—quite English, you know—remains in my mind. A tiny, droll, nondescript figure, clad in voluminous turkish trousers of blue, and a scrimpy basque-like jacket, with some foolish sort of dish-plate hat crowning the whole effect. And her laugh! How it bubbles and rings out like a clarion call to merriment. Was there ever a person living who could resist the laugh of Katie Barry? It told you more about laughter than all the treatises of Bergson and other Philosophers put together. For it convinced you that there is no limit to the potentialities of a happy, hearty laugh.

CHAPTER IX

Marvels of Strength and Skill

I BELIEVE there are people who say that they do not care for acrobatic performances. Of course there are reasons for this antipathy. One is that the element of danger, which to many people is a source of attraction, to others is distasteful if not positively distressing. Another reason is satiety. The feats performed have so exceeded the limit of what seems humanly possible that, after having witnessed a certain number with astonishment, nothing more can cause any surprise or stimulate the jaded appetite. If one impossibility can be performed, why not another? Astonishment by itself is not a good wearing quality. It needs to be reinforced by something else if it is to last.

ANNETTE KELLERMAN

With these cloyed appetites contrast the rapture of a child who witnesses such performances for the first time. The apparent ease with which difficulties are overcome deceives him. He feels assured that he too can perform these wonders, and defy gravity and space with daring leaps and unfailing poise. I think there is a dismal gap in the experience of anyone who cannot look back on the time when, after the first visit to a show of some kind, this new world of hazard and daring opened up before him. Then came the ambition to enter into this new world. The tottering attempts to maintain one's balance for one moment on the top rail of a fence; the ignominious tumbles; the gradual awakening to the fact that severe discipline lay between attempt and achievement; the triumph of an infinitesimal success and the growing control of muscle and balance—all these should have their place in the storehouse of memories belonging to each of us.

I have in my mind a picture of a tiny, pet-

ticoated creature, standing waveringly on the garden roller, shuffling desperately with sandaled feet, in emulation of the accomplishment of a wonderful ball-roller, who with his feet had propelled his ball to the top of a narrow spiral path that in retrospect seemed to have soared to the height of a sky-scraper but which, I suppose, in reality may have reached some thirty feet.

The child's stunt was never mastered, but the attempt at that and other achievements had their share in implanting a consciousness of the thrill that the conquest of some daring or hazardous venture brings with it. It taught, too, something of the requirements needful to accomplish successfully even the simplest acrobatic acts: the poise, the mastery of every movement, the timing, the clearness of head and, above all, the patient practice which achieved the mastery. And I believe it is only this sympathetic viewing of acrobatics which can afford lasting pleasure in these acts. If we sit back inert and watch them merely as a perform-

ance of danger and difficulty we shall soon tire of them. But given even just enough knowledge of gymnasium work to realize for one's self the sensation, say of jumping for a trapeze bar, balancing one's self upright on a rail, climbing hand over hand up a rope or any other quite elementary exercises, and use the memory of these sensations to help you to feel the movements of acrobats with your own senses; then, so far from complaining of boredom, you are more likely to find their feats too thrilling.

What wonders they do accomplish, to be sure! There may be a few trick performances that have more showiness than actual skill; but by far the most part of them are, beyond suspicion, genuine marvels in their control of muscle, poise and timing. Heads must be incapable of dizziness, eyes sure and keen, wits alert and responsive and the whole body kept in a state of health and sanity. Without faltering they must intrust their lives into the hands of their fellows, literally as well as figuratively. And

to make the act acceptable it must all be done with a zest and joy which makes the least of what is often the most difficult. Occasionally, especially with some of the foreign troupes, we find them lashing themselves into an intoxication with the abandon of their prowess.

See those whirling Arabs hurl themselves in wild circling rings. Some heels over head, some doing hand spans and some those curious wheeling twists in the air in which both gravity and anatomy are defied. How they vie with one another in endurance and agility and cry out with irrepressible exultation! We know that their skill is the result of long toilsome training, of patient practice and heart-breaking discipline. But to us they give only the joy of it, the sense of mastery, the achievements of which the physical energies are capable.

There is a Japanese troupe calling themselves the Mori Brothers. What could be more joyous than the zest with which they seem to play with the barrel which, as they

lie on their backs, they hurl with their feet from one to another! They are not afraid to demonstrate the difficulty of their task by occasionally missing a catch. In fact, one almost suspects them of heightening their effects thereby. But how comically they express their derision of the unlucky one in a pantomime of wagging toes, softly rubbed feet and face grinning like a comic mask.

They do some wonderful tumbling, too. For, as one man lies on the couch, his feet in the air, he supports on them his fellow, by the shoulders, head downward. From this position he tosses him in air and catches him, standing upright, on his feet, the two men being feet to feet.

There are two men who are called on the bills Hanlon and Clifton, who present a very clever act in a quite unusual way. When the scene opens, it discloses a comfortably appointed parlor, in which the two are discovered, dressed in ordinary business clothes, the one in an armchair near the

fire and the other playing on the piano. They might be two ordinary young chaps, sharing an apartment together, spending a quiet evening. Presently they both arise and strolling to the table each helps himself to a cigarette; then sit down, one on either side of the table. The larger of the two lights his cigarette; then, holding out his hand across the table, grasps those of the smaller man, who, springing from his seat, is immediately balanced, feet up in the air, on the hand of his companion. In this position the larger one moves him, he himself arching his body, until their two cigarettes touch and the smaller obtains the needed light. They continue to do amazing feats on this order, all in the same easy, nonchalant way, as if it were nothing out of the usual.

I believe they do remove their coats for some of the more energetic manœuvres, but otherwise they show no signs of exertion. There is nothing of the attitudinizing to the audience or the conscious demand for ap-

WILL ROGERS

plause so often indulged in by acrobatic performers. Finally, when the turn is over, they stroll back, each to the position he occupied at the rise of the curtain and appear to be absorbed in the books and music of the quiet evening at home.

It is rather a curious study of the psychology of audiences that, although during this performance one hears on all sides exclamations of surprise and delight, the fall of the curtain on the quiet, unspectacular scene rather discounts the volume of the applause.

Not less wonderful are the pyramiding and somersaulting of such experts as the Brack Troupe, or the balancing of the Heyn Brothers. They pile on to one another's shoulders, three or four high; then from the topmost pinnacle, the wiry, lightly built youth jumps, turning a somersault in air, and lands on the next highest human tier, and so on to the ground. All of these look so easy when done by experts. As you sit back comfortably in your velvet-upholstered

chair you may feel inclined to say with a shrug (I have heard it myself): "Oh, just a little practice, that's all it needs!" But the person who says this is usually of the rotund proportions which suggest that his muscles have never been put to a greater strain than that required to step on or off a street car, while if he devoted the rest of his life (which under such circumstances would probably not be long) to practice, he would never achieve the simplest of the feats performed.

Not content with pyramids and somersaults from the firm earth we have them performed from motor-cycles, slack wires, anything to add to their danger and difficulty. I remember being told by a professional acrobat that there are not above a dozen different feats essential for the acrobat and that the art of the performer comprises the combining and enhancing of these in such a way as to construct a "novelty." And so we find them thinking out new risks, piling one difficulty on another, never satis-

fied to achieve less than what seems to be impossible.

Nor is the skill any less when it is mixed with grotesque humor, as when we see one of a troupe whose business it is to make a series of failures, as brilliant in their own way as the successes of his fellows. Or there is Bert Melrose, a single performer, whose slippings and stumblings as he climbs up onto the loosely piled up tables, makes one's heart jump. When he finally reaches the top and sits on a chair, rocking complacently, it is a positive relief that at last he falls with perfect ease and safety, bouncing up again in a triumph of boneless curves and twists and eccentric grins.

The humors of these comedy acrobats are surely inherited from the clowns and pantaloons of earlier days, with extra skill and agility added to the foolery. There is in most of us still enough of the child to laugh at their drolleries as they tangle themselves up in the furniture or fall, not only over, but under and all around the table, or put

their feet through the rung of a chair and only extricate themselves by wriggling the whole body after it.

There is a troupe of these clown-acrobats called The Bogannys, which includes at least two dwarfs. The gusto with which they all throw themselves (literally as well as figuratively) into the uproarious fun, the whirlings and somersaultings and the vivid pantomime with which they emphasize the piquancy of their comedy give an air of phantasy and unreality to their performance. In their white bakers' dresses they are like some strange creatures seen in a dream, flitting and diving and rolling, now through the air, now along the ground; now entwined together so that they seem like some curious many-legged insect whirring across the stage. Laughing carelessly, they fling each other from place to place with expressive gestures and lively caperings.

Apropos of their pantomime, I heard a dispute once between two ladies as to the nationality of this troupe. One was sure

they must be Italians. "Only Italians could have those picture-making gestures," she declared. "They might be Russians," her companion suggested. "Look at the abandon, the verve of their movements."

As I looked I felt sure that both of them were right. There was certainly something exotic and foreign about these examples of perpetual motion. Just then the big, fat man of the troupe, evidently the leader, best in pantomime and very little behind in agility despite his girth, cried out: " 'Owld orn, neow! Hup yer gew!" and then methought I recognized the native tongue of the Land of Cockaigne! Was it possible that, after all, this vivacious, gesticulating foreigner was a Britisher?

The pantomime idea has been expanded into a connected story with much clever and amusing acrobatics interwoven by the De Witt, Burns and Torrance troupe in their delightful wonder act, "The Awakening of the Toys." It is conceived and carried out in the true spirit of Toyland, where the im-

possible becomes commonplace and the actual appears ridiculous.

Occasionally, but very rarely, our acrobats meet with accidents on the stage. But they take these risks very philosophically as part of the day's work. I remember hearing an acrobat tell with some pride that he had broken seventeen bones at one time or another but always while practising. He took great credit to himself that he had never had the bad manners to distress his audience by an exhibition of such maladroitness. To the public he owed only delight and it would have humiliated him to think that he had given them even this vicarious pain.

Not exactly acrobats but appealing to something of the same motive are the prodigies of strength and muscle who exhibit their remarkable achievements. The earliest that I can recall is the young Sandow, then a blonde-haired youth able to lift a pony. Since then the list of these Samsons has been long and much ingenuity has been displayed in diversifying their acts. Women as well

DAINTY MARIE

as men are in the ranks. Among these muscular heroines to-day we have Charmon, the "Perfect Woman," whose muscles are not only wonderfully developed but are also perfectly controlled, so that to her enormous strength she adds grace and deftness.

The cowboy feats of skill and daring call for many of the same qualities as those displayed by the acrobat, though their technical accomplishment is different. The cool head, the precise well-timed movement, the unflinching decision. One of the most fascinating of these is the lassoing exhibition of Will Rogers. In his hand the lariat becomes a thing of life, twirling, twisting and winding in graceful spirals, now over his head, now around his knees. As he throws it one almost fancies it looking for its victim and poising itself, quivering, for the attack. Then, having selected the exact spot, darting at it with a lightning-like flick and enfolding itself around it.

I wonder what is the exact process of mind that guides the muscles in all exploits

of this sort: those of the pitcher, the bowler, the boomerang thrower or the wielder of the oxwhip. It calls for something more than the sure eye and steady hand needed to aim with gun or arrow. It is a sense of poise which in some way projects itself through the course it has determined on and controls the muscles accordingly. But what a complicated process that is for the subconscious mind to accomplish.

The picturesque side of the athlete is not neglected in Vaudeville and we have many different posing acts in which the fine forms and graceful postures of wrestlers, runners and hammer throwers are demonstrated. Sometimes the jabs and punches of prize-fighters are shown, or it may be ancient statuary is duplicated by living figures covered with white or bronze powder.

Quite as pictorial as these and combining no little agility and a touch of humor, we have Adonis and his clever little dog. The man balances himself on one hand upon a pedestal in postures and at angles which

seem impossible and, finally, still on his hands, feet in the air, descends from the pedestal and walks down a short flight of steps. Meanwhile, the dog, which has previously assisted by posing, now on his master's shoulder, now on his head, now on his upraised foot, taking his position in each case with a comical air of satisfaction, as if he were sure that he was the chief attraction, hoists himself on his forelegs hind-feet in the air, and marches demurely downstairs behind his master with all the impertinence of a conscious mimic.

The pictorial appeal was also illustrated in the popularity of the diving act of Annette Kellerman. For although her singing is above the average and she has considerable charm as a dancer and her diving feature is good, it was the perfect symmetry and lithe vigor of her form which won for her the admiration of the audience. There was, too, an impersonality in her posing, an absolute freedom from self-consciousness which was a revelation to those unused to

associating modesty with the frank display of beauty of form.

In direct contradiction to the pictorial posings are the tricks of the contortionists, who bend and twist and tie themselves into every conceivable grotesque knot. If the athlete emphasizes the beauty and rhythmic poise of the well developed body in action, these enforce the grotesqueness of which it is capable when thus distorted. Can anybody, I wonder, enjoy both forms of entertainment? For my part, I confess the contortionist is not for me.

But once in a while comes along a little elf of a creature, like one who calls herself "Dainty Marie," who puts into her contortions a mischievous diablerie which gives piquancy to their uncanniness. This odd little sprite-like creature, slim and straight, with a quaint triangle of a face, who began her performance by singing some commonplace songs, climbed a slack rope, chattering and laughing and chirping out all sorts of impertinences, meanwhile twisting her-

CHARMON — THE PERFECT WOMAN

self and the ropes into every variety of complicated knot. Then, suddenly, she would fall, catching herself by a hitch of the foot in the rope and, hanging head downward, continue the chattering with the persistence of a parrokeet, her queer little three cornered face with its mop of tousled hair grinning fantastically. Then she played impish tricks on the weirdly dressed little parody of a page, her partner, twisting and bumping her as she clung to the rope she was supposed to steady, all the time laughing maliciously at the poor thing's discomfiture. It was a sort of goblin revel, and even contortions had their place in it.

But my preference as a rule is for the exponents of skill and daring, muscles developed naturally and vigorously, joints working with suppleness but unstrained, the body developed in rhythmic balanced proportions. I like to realize what wonderful machines they are, these bodies of ours, when managed by experts, and of what efficiency they are capable when every mus-

cle is trained to its fullest use. But, I repeat, I should like to feel sure that every member of the audience had some personal knowledge of the sense of controlled muscular activity and harmony of movement. That they should all, at least once in their lives, have tested the need of accuracy of eye, sureness of movement, clearness of head, power of grasp, steadiness of nerve and all the hundred and one other things entailed in acrobatic feats. It would be wholesome and invigorating for them to feel that sympathetic thrill through their own frames in response to the daring of the performers, and insure them from the enervating sensationalism that comes of watching the danger of others in which we ourselves have no share.

ADA REEVE

CHAPTER X

Mysteries and Illusions

IN these days of materialism no illusionist on the stage makes any pretence to the employment of superhuman agencies. A scientific phenomenon hitherto unknown is the nearest to the insoluble that they will allow themselves. But much more often, following the example of those famous English wonder-workers, Maskelyn and Cook, they frankly own that they are tricking you and put it up to you to solve the secret if you can.

This in no way decreases the mystery of their performances. In fact, with some of them it would be almost easier to attribute their seeming impossibilities to the work of spirits than to attempt to believe them the work of human agencies. So that our wiz-

ards have not divested themselves of their magic robes, but merely changed them to a more modern cut.

This is the method adopted by Carl Herman in his "Window of the Haunted House," an illusion on the order of the cabinet mysteries. Right before the audience stands the "window," looking as though it might be a dormer taken from the top story of some house. It has two sides painted to represent brick, while the front, made of gauze stretched on a window frame, forms the transparent window. The back is covered by curtains of black sateen hanging loose, there is a canvas roof and a solid floor. The whole structure is raised about three feet from the stage and supported on lightly built legs.

The audience is shown that this structure is entirely empty and there is no trap in floor or ceiling, but, for all that, the moment the stage is darkened we see figures moving about through the transparent window. A young girl, an old woman, a sailor, a painter,

then a man and woman together, struggling in some violent quarrel. Then a pair of lovers are seen clasped in fond embrace. Then, a commotion, and the lights spring up, and at the window appear two men, one of them dressed as a fireman, supporting the inert body of a young woman, whose long hair, as her head droops from their arms, hangs out of the now open window and nearly touches the floor. The apparitions have followed each other in little more time than it takes to tell of them but of their absolute solidity (at least of the final group) there can be no doubt.

At some time and in some way they have conveyed themselves, unseen by the hundreds of people supposedly watching for them, into that box-like structure. At some time the Professor has seen to it that the attention of the audience shall be attracted to some point, sufficiently far from where their entrance is made. And, most likely, the action with which he riveted our attention was a seemingly trivial one. For it is one of

the great arts of these masters of mystery to make the trivial seem important and the important trivial. The normal human impulse is their study, and they count upon it to attract or divert attention by the simplest methods. So that the very concentration with which the audience watches must be used, not as an obstacle but as an aid to the success of the trick.

The Orientals have ever been masters of this command of the attention of the audience, and they carry their illusions of shaking from a cloth full pails of water, chickens, or children to a wonderful perfection. So, in his gorgeous setting of embroidered Dragons on curtains of silk, varying in color and design for various acts, Ching Ling Foo presents all these bewildering fantasies with nonchalant wizardry, smiling his inscrutable smile. And the tiny Chinese children who assist him are so quaint, so unhuman and yet so childlike, that they seem like very perfect toys and one feels inclined to cry out with astonishment when

they run about or smile like other children.

A number of years ago there appeared at the Alhambra in London an American lady named Annie Abbott. She had an act which was quite new to the British public and made a great sensation. Though slight and almost fragile in appearance, she could seemingly withstand the united strength of twenty men. A chair, upheld by her with no apparent effort, could not be forced to the floor, try as they might. Nor could any man lift her unless she allowed it, though her weight seemed nothing above the ordinary.

The name "Georgia Magnet" was supposed to give a clue to the source of her power, and tales were told of the feats of the lady in her youth and in her native country. Doctors and scientific men were invited to investigate her performance and she succeeded in interesting no less a person than King Edward VII, then Prince of Wales.

No direct claim to supernatural power was made, but theories about magnetism or

the influencing of currents were offered. The management, in fact, put itself into the position of begging the public to help it to find a solution of the mystery of this strange power.

For some time the Georgia Magnet was the talk of all England. Then she went on to the Continent and was less favorably received. There was talk about the mystery being merely a matter of adjusted balances and after a while nothing more was heard or seen of her in Europe.

Lately she has reappeared in full vigor with the same amazing act, confounding the devices of strong-armed men.

Balance or no balance, or whatever is the secret of her power, it is a remarkable exhibition. For, if it is balance, it must be most nicely adjusted; and though the little lady may not be especially magnetized, she at least has extraordinary vivacity and personality to hold the attention of the public and especially of the committee whom she calls on to assist her in her demonstrations.

HOUDINI

For although we enjoy being mystified, there is always a very large percentage of people who would love to know "how it is done." And these are not by any means the ones most likely to volunteer to act on the committee. They will scrutinize from their place in the audience and suggest solutions of the problem to their neighbors. At any time, also, some member of the committee may hit on an idea, near enough to the truth to prove embarrassing to the performer. So she must watch them constantly and find occupation and diversion for those who might prove troublesome, but without allowing them to feel that they are in any way regarded with suspicion.

In talking once to an old magician and prestidigitator I remember him saying that the most mystifying illusions are frequently the result of the simplest tricks, and that devices, thought out by him on the spur of the minute, were often more successful than those over which he labored for months. The reason that the public do not find them out

is that they are looking for some elaborate device for what is the result of a very simple action. He instanced one of the old cabinet tricks, in which a bound man was put into the cabinet and in a minute, when the curtains were withdrawn, he was discovered still bound but stripped of his waistcoat, his coat being still on. This was explained by the fact that the waistcoat he wore before retiring into the cabinet was a trick one, having no back, and he was able to remove it without the aid of his hands. Meanwhile he dropped on to the floor at his feet an ordinary waistcoat which he had carried concealed beneath his arm and when this was shown to the public a great point was made that it was still warm from his body. As a matter of fact, he said, the waistcoat was much warmer than it would have been if it had been worn in the ordinary way, but even the most scrutinizing investigator had never noticed the fact.

Another man who has succeeded in mystifying the public is Houdini, to whose

power as a wonder-creator must be added ingenuity as an advertiser. No fetters will hold him and he seems to be amphibious. He has defied the drowning capacity of the combined forces of the Hudson and the East River at the Battery and the locks, bolts and bars of the old prison-ship *Success,* behind which so many prisoners have languished.

His performance on the stage is sufficiently mystifying, if less sensational, than those he has exhibited free, gratis to the public. He makes his appearance on the stage, on which before a canopy of yellow curtaining are arranged a huge safe-like tank, with a glass front, and the brass pails and cisterns, filled with water which is to be poured into it. He is his own showman and is wearing the ordinary dress of a citizen as he explains his paraphernalia. He speaks good English, with just the suspicion of a trill of the R and a carefulness of enunciation to suggest that it is not his native tongue. His manner is quiet and self-con-

tained, his form small, and even when stripped for his plunge shows no extraordinary muscular development. Evidently his power is that of dexterity, rather than force.

He exhibits the contrivance which forms the lid of the tank into which he will presently be plunged, head downward. It is constructed like the old-time stocks in which the feet were held tight clipped at the ankles. A committee is asked to examine this contrivance to make sure that the feet could not be slipped out when once the lock is securely fastened. While the tank is being filled with water Houdini retires to prepare for his plunge and reappears in a bathing suit, his arms and legs bare. We see the water splashing into the tank from a hose-pipe as well as from the pails on the stage. There is no doubt about its reality.

Houdini is then secured in the stocks and hoisted by a pulley into the air, then lowered into the tank with a splash and a swish which drenches his attendants. Then the

CHING LING FOO

canopy is drawn forward and round the tank.

Two minutes elapse: then the curtains are withdrawn, and behold the man of mystery is standing beside his tank, unfettered, and —wonder of wonders—hardly more than splashed with wet. His wiry bush of hair, the real showman's hair, is dry. One is assured of this after one sees him emerge from another plunge when his hair becomes slick and smooth and dripping like ordinary hair. Is there some clue here to "how it is done"? I don't know, only it sets one thinking.

Of his sensational emersion, confined in a box punched with holes, in the bay at the Battery and the attempt of the police to stop the exhibition, on account of its alleged danger, I own I can imagine no solution; or how he escapes from the cells of the ship's dungeon which must have been attempted by others before in more desperate cases. He makes no claim to extraordinary powers and is content that you shall

discover his methods if you are clever enough.

This is, after all, quite as it should be to typify our age. For Science is our Magic with germs and microbes as Imps of good or evil. Chemistry is the witches' cauldron and Mechanics the broomstick, while Serums and Inoculations take the place of charms against evil. Physics supply the magic manifestations and Psychology the spells which entrance the unlearned multitude and gain its wondering credence.

RAY COX

CHAPTER XI

Miscellaneous Fun-makers

WHEN all is said and done, it will, undoubtedly, be found that what the Vaudeville audience most craves is a good, hearty laugh. A turn which is certain to provide this is pretty sure to be a success. The comic sketch, the knock-about acrobat and dancer are aiming at this great achievement. But the one above all whose merchandise is laughter, first, last and all the time, is the story-telling song-singing comedian. He is the direct descendant of the Court Jester of early days. He must amuse or lose his head. He is privileged to tilt with his wit at objects usually considered too venerable for attack. His personalities are excused, his breaches of decorum overlooked, if only he succeeds in his purpose of compelling a laugh.

The public may be fickle but as long as these mirth-providers can afford it food for merriment they cannot grow too old for a welcome. There is, for example, Gus Williams. I don't know how far back he dates, but he is an acknowledged old-timer. Yet his stories and quaint turns of expression are lively still.

And there is Lew Dockstader, whose blackened face and red minstrel lips have looked out from the hoardings of nearly every city in the Union any time these twenty years and more. His voice may be growing a little thin and worn, but his unctuous chuckle is just as infectious as ever it was!

Whatever may be the name or setting of their particular sketch, the true intent of MacIntyre and Heath is to provide a medium for amusing dialogue, anecdote and repartee. Here again are the black-faces. The contrast, however, in appearance between these two fun-makers—the small, meagre, stumbling, fumbling manner of the

one and the portly, pompous, imposing deportment of the other—makes a fine groundwork on which to build varying inventions of mirth-provoking incongruity.

And talking about blackened faces, could anyone withstand the shambling, ingenuous drollery of Frank Tinney? He comes as near to the genuine, native darky humor as any one of the black-face tribe. There is just the "colored-gen'leman's" mixture of childish bashfulness and self-satisfaction about him as he shuffles on to the stage, arrayed in his miscellaneous, misfit garments. His self-satisfaction makes it necessary that he shall talk, even if he has nothing in particular to say; and his bashfulness makes him hesitate and shuffle and get his words hopelessly mixed up. He is artlessly confiding, and tells you all about his own affairs in those queer, blurted sentences with their bewildered pauses, helped out with "you know what I mean," and an innocent, ingratiating smile.

He knows you are going to laugh at him,

though he doesn't quite know why, but he laughs with you so that you shall not discover that fact. Or if he thinks that you have misunderstood him he enters into elaborate explanations which begin with "Listen! no, but listen!" and tangles himself up more hopelessly than ever.

Al Jolson is a fun-maker of quite a different type. He has a vigorous, swinging energy that keeps things busy all around him. His is not the negro comedy but a more conscious humor, full of a vitality which overflows and can diffuse itself into a whole stage-full of people and make the air full of the hum of fun and merriment.

Bert Williams, like many of the fun-makers, varies his narratives with songs, sung with odd, unexpected accents to the words. For, of course, it is the words that the audience wants from the comedian. The orchestra can be trusted to supply the music, the comedian need not trouble about that. Indeed, I don't think it would approve if he did. It is laughter, and more

BERT WILLIAMS

laughter, and still laughter which is his concern; and, if Caruso had started his career as a professional funny-man, I doubt whether he would have had much chance to be heard in pure music.

So we have, too, Fred Duprez, who sometimes sings, and whose comicalities come bubbling out so fast that he never has time to finish one story before he is plunged into the next. He has a way of working up the point of his joke so that the train for the laugh is all laid, and then, just as you expect him to explode it, he stops short and leaves you to set the match yourself while he is up and away, off to lay a new train. I have seen an audience left so breathless by his sudden change of base that it has almost seemed as if the spark were going to miss fire. But somehow the day was saved. A droll pause of bewilderment, as he waited for the audience to catch up with him, an inquiring turn of the head with a slowly widening smile, and the spark was guided

to the charge and the salvo of laughter boomed out.

Bert Fitzgibbon, the "daffydill," is another comedian whose absurdities crowd one upon another until laughter becomes almost a weariness. His drolleries are of the order that depend entirely for their effect on the manner in which they are given. I doubt very much whether they would appear funny in cold print. But, given with his absurd mixture of whimsicality and silliness, they keep his audience in a gale of laughter. It is a conscious, crazy foolishness, well pleased with itself and willing to let you in on the joke, if you like; but not caring greatly whether you do or not. Maybe, you will call him downright silly, but he will only laugh the louder and play wilder pranks than ever, not a bit impressed by your solemnity. It is the crazy frolic of youth, exhilarated by its own high spirits. If you can let yourself go, and join in the fun there may be no better sport. But it could never compel a smile, if you are not in

FRANK TINNEY

the humor for it. Fortunately, the laughter of the audience is generally there, glad to be set at liberty and not too critical of the means employed to release it.

Neither of the two last named performers assume any particularly characteristic costume. They wish for no disguise, but associate themselves as closely as possible with their own normal personality. You might easily recognize them if you met them afterward on the street.

As a contrast we have the extravagant "tramp" make-up of Nat Wills, or of Billy McDermot, who calls himself "the last of Coxey's army." It is a purely American product, this comic tramp, and he has become almost as much a tradition as is the Pierrot of the French Pantomime.

He is a happy, tattered, slovenly, red-nosed rogue; glorying in his detestation of work and water and gaily oblivious of the rights of property. He lies for the pure joy of lying and his hunger and thirst are absolutely unappeasable. His costume has

become traditional. A battered hat, through which his hair sticks out; the remnants of a once black coat; ragged pants, too large for him, supported by a string round the waist, from which is suspended his trusty tomato can; a gaping pair of shoes cover sockless feet—the whole effect being surmounted by a grin of inordinate proportions which seems to stretch nearly round his head. He is full of chuckling mirth and has a vocabulary of slang large enough to start a new language. He has a super-ingenuous manner, which he especially assumes when he most intends to deceive, while the excuses that he can give for avoiding anything which looks in the least like work may be contradictory but are without end.

Such is the type, and there are many of him besides the two above mentioned. The details may differ but the essentials remain the same. He is a brand of the "picaresque" or Spanish rogue—comedian, mixed with the clown of the harlequinade. His face is painted almost as grotesquely as theirs

NAT WILLS

and, like them, he is a survival and already a tradition. The tendency of the present day audience is, I think, to tolerate rather than to crave these grotesques; and I question whether it is not rather amused by the inherent humor of their stories and jokes, which differ but little from those of other tellers of stories, than by the tramp characteristics they assume.

Further there are the political and topical monologists. Such was the late Cliff Gordon and such is Rube Dickerman. These talk about current events, criticizing freely and often hitting very shrewdly.

Rube Dickerman assumes the disguise of an Indiana farmer; small, gray, with chin whiskers and a quiet, drawling speech in a high-pitched voice which breaks at unexpected places, and at other times trails off apologetically. He has a shambling, preoccupied walk, with bent knees and dragging feet—the walk of a man who is on his feet all day and every day but who never

walks from choice. But he can dance; and, when he does, he manages still to maintain the characteristics of his type. His is the gaiety of a man who seldom unbends and, when he finds himself doing so, is uncertain whether he or his friends are the more surprised.

Cliff Gordon's was a wholly different rendering of the same idea. He presented it as a German-American politician, hard-headed, shrewd-witted and not easily deceived. There was no appearance of jollity as he spoke of current events or the present situation, but rather a kind of fiery impatience just turned from bitterness by the humorous curl of the large lips and a softened twinkle of the keen blue eyes under their shaggy brows. He spoke in a direct translation from German idioms which gave unexpected and very expressive turns to his remarks and helped to take the sting from their sharpness. His monologues provoked loud and hearty laughter, while Rube Dickerman's call forth a continuous soft chuckle.

ISABEL D'ARMOND

There is all the difference between stroking and striking; and, while Cliff Gordon struck vigorously one's sense of the ridiculous and called forth an equally vigorous response, Rube Dickerman just strokes one's sense of humor and evokes a chuckle that continuously purrs.

The Hebrew comedian is another well known Vaudeville type. I never saw Dave Warfield when he played these parts and do not know whether he was funnier than Joe Weber, whose work is always so full of character that he does not seem to be acting at all. Among the clever characterizations in this line is that of Ben Welch. It is conceived in the true comedy vein, by which I mean that it is not grotesquely exaggerated. The character is adhered to consistently and you are made to feel that in spite of his exuberant humor this is a real person.

Ben Welch has the true comedian's sense of the value of movement and the necessity of occasional repose. Every gesture or twitch of the muscle gives some addition

of character to the impersonation. No matter whether he is stumbling onto the stage with his shiftless, slouching, casual gait, or giving burlesque imitations of a Yiddishized Napoleon or Abraham Lincoln; or darting off the stage with bent knees and furtive stride; or by pantomime describing the jab of a hypodermic needle, the action is always exactly adjusted to the idea. There is no superfluous emphasis, no fidgetty, meaningless motion; but every muscle of limbs, face, and body is responsive and controlled. His smile is slow-spreading and crafty, as he explains "Any man what's smarter than I am I don't want to do no business with." Or it is smugly self-satisfied as he explains how as car-conductor he found business too slow on the horse-car line, and so took his car around to Fourteenth Street, where business is rushing.

He sings unsentimental parodies on the popular songs in a mixture of the slang of the day with the speech of the ghetto and we get some of those surprises of language

KATE ELINOR — THE HUMAN BILLIKEN

which in time become current phrases. And, withal, he is genial, content with himself and everything around him. He finds nothing to criticize in life, for he is confident that if anything should happen to be wrong he will be able to turn it to his own advantage. And there we get the touch of cynicism which completes the character.

The fun-makers are not all of the masculine gender. One of the funniest of them is Kate Elinor, whose spontaneous, rollicking absurdities seem to gush from an unfailing spring. Her cheery good humor and inconsequent comicality have earned for her the name of the "Human Billikin." Never was woman less troubled with self-consciousness. Her face is one broad, expansive smile which seems to radiate from the top of her little nob of hair, tightly screwed to the size of a shoe-button, right down to the sole of her formidable looking boots, and from every angle of her square-built frame. She is the most familiar of friends with her audience, not only as a whole but individually

and separately. You could fancy that she calls each one of them by his first name and knows his wife and how old the baby is. There is a gesture she uses, to mark when she thinks her points have hit the mark. She points her finger, as though it were a pistol, at some individual in the audience, screws up one eye as though to sight and clicks with her mouth to make the sound of a shot. This is done with an offhand carelessness just to keep things lively. And then that giggling, deprecating flap of the hand, with the broad, good-natured smile accompanying it—it is quite her own and is just the gesture that a Billikin should make. Her audience is speedily engulfed in laughter like a rock at high tide. And how she responds to and gloats over their mirth, and reabsorbs it to radiate it on them again.

Another lady to claim a place among the fun-makers is Isabel d'Armond. Her tiny, laughing, piquant personality with its air of droll seriousness, has something of the intentness of a child at play. Dressed in the

McINTYRE AND HEATH

most freakish of costumes and with lines that are often more than a little risqué, she carries them all off with this air of absorbed briskness, as unmindful of the laughter of her audience as Kate Elinor is responsive to it. I remember her in absurd pantalettes and a very unmanageable hoop-skirt. Her preoccupation with this unruly garment and apparent annoyance with its uncouthness, all the while seeming to try to carry off her embarrassment without attracting attention, was as cleverly depicted as it was laughable. She can dance, too, very neatly and nimbly. So can her partner, whose legs, describing wild circles and arches far above her head make him seem, in comparison with her tiny figure, like some huge daddy-long-legs.

The songs of Kathleen Clifford are always sure to provoke an answering laugh, while Ray Cox is a direct contradiction to the assertion that women have no sense of humor. Hear her describe a ball game or an aëroplane ascent and you will be convinced

that these are the most humorous happenings imaginable.

Individuality of method is as much a characteristic of these fun-makers as is similarity of motive. Each, whether male or female, has his own special brand of humor. What could be more widely different than the dry whimsicality which characterizes Marshall Wilder and the smooth mellifluousness which has gained for George Evans the sobriquet of the "Honeyboy."

The measure of the success of each is almost purely a matter of personality. But we can trace in the work of all of them the same directness and clarity of appeal and the feeling for proportion we have already alluded to in a former chapter.

They are very truly a factor of modern life and supply much of the funny anecdote and epigram which subsequently enliven after-dinner speeches, political discussions and various other occasions of public speaking. And, by way of completing

the circle, every story, or repartee, or other laugh-making utterance which originates elsewhere, is pretty certain, sooner or later, to find its way into Vaudeville.

CHAPTER XII

Some Other Turns

IN this brief glance at a few of the most characteristic of Vaudeville turns there can be no attempt to mention every variety of form under which they may be presented. For of necessity the most distinguishing trait of Vaudeville is its variety and, unless we recognize this, we ignore its most salient feature. So that the deeper we go into the subject the more varied and numerous will be the aspects of the offerings which claim our attention. Anything that will amuse, interest, or satisfy the curiosity is welcome. But the welcome is easily outworn and, if the only claim to interest is that of novelty, it cannot expect to have more than a brief day. But novelty is one of the essentials, so that even acts, having interest

GERTRUDE BARNES

beyond that of curiosity, must be constantly refurbished to make them appear new. What wonder, then, if turns are sometimes incongruous or far-fetched?

Accordingly, we have every imaginable thing, animate or inanimate, keenly scrutinized with a view to their use for entertainment. The circus is freely borrowed from and animals of all sorts are pressed into service. We have bears on roller skates; ponies who ring out a tune on hand-bells; and cats, dogs, rabbits, pigeons, presenting episodes that imitate the doings of the dominant race—sometimes in a manner far from complimentary. We have monkeys who play billiards, ride bicycles, smoke and drink and behave generally in a manner so like an extremely ill-bred man that it is a wonder that some of the audience do not feel affronted.

Until the acts are actually tried out it is impossible for certain what will capture the fancy of an audience, and there are some which must rack the nerves of the local manager every Monday matinée, so narrow is

the line on which they waver between success and failure.

There is a young man, called Van Hoven, whose offering consists of incoherent chatter, mostly about his own personal affairs, delivered by way of an aside to the conductor of the orchestra while he pretends to be occupied with some childishly simple tricks of palming, which he does so badly that they could not pass muster at a country school entertainment. In carrying out one of these tricks he leaves the stage and rushes about among the audience to entreat the assistance of two volunteers for one of his tricks. From the gallery or some other remote part of the house he finally emerges with two boys evidently especially selected on account of the impenetrable stupidity of their appearance. He brings them to the stage and proceeds to pour out breathlessly a string of contradictory instructions to them which they stolidly and conscientiously try to follow. The unsmiling bewilderment of their efforts invariably convulses the au-

dience with merriment and brings the act to a successful termination, but the sentiment throughout the act is very critical and not a few disapproving remarks are made.

In the case of this act one can follow the public sentiment in some such way as this: the first stage is expectancy. "He will surely do something soon."

The second stage is Exasperation: "Why doesn't he begin to do something?"

The third stage is amazement: "The nerve of him to keep us waiting and not do anything."

The last stage is amusement: "He actually hasn't done anything but he has gotten away with it just the same."

And the audience laughs heartily at the young man's colossal nerve, its own credulity and the bewildered confusion of the two boys who are the young man's assistants.

What manager can feel sure that his audience will take the joke good-naturedly?

The desire to see a celebrity, or, unfortunately, a notoriety is the motive of certain

turns. And for some reason it seems to make these celebrities more real and tangible if they appear in other than their wonted métier. To hear a prizefighter talk, or a peer of England sing, or to see a baseball player act or an actor play baseball would seem to demonstrate that these people of whom we have read in the papers are just ordinary folks, not prodigies of tremendous achievement only, but capable of doing other things than those which have made them famous or with which their names have become associated. It is not a very elevated attitude of mind, but it is very human and by no means confined to the unintelligent. We find, for instance, so brilliant a man as Samuel Butler in his Note Book chuckling unmercifully over the idea that a bishop is seasick like any ordinary mortal.

Very accomplished are some of the cartoonists and sand artists who evolve in full sight of their audience a spirited sketch from quite unsuggestive beginnings. From two foliations, which, when first presented, might

AL JOLSON

be taken for vegetables, may grow perhaps the ear and necktie of a well-known politician or perhaps a cow's head and cottage chimney in a landscape. The skill and ingenuity of these artists keep the audience expectant and eager all through the building up stroke by stroke of the subject and calls for admiration when it is ultimately achieved.

The latest inventions of science, if sufficiently spectacular, find easy admittance on to the Vaudeville stage and gramophones, tel-electric and kinetophones are only some of the wonders here displayed. And, apropos of the kinetophone, it would seem as though the time were about ripe for the artistic genius of the moving picture to arise. For, in the case of the latter, we are, at present, in the anomalous condition of having an elaborate apparatus of wonderful mechanical possibilities but as yet no dramatic or artistic technique with which to develop their resources. Consequently, the effect of the voice being added to the motion

picture, so far from rendering the presentations more interesting, has only given to them a weapon which they are not able to wield. For, to time voice and action in such a way as shall become natural and easy when represented on the screen has not yet become part of the actor's equipment, any more than to write dialogue which shall not impede the movement of the pictures has become part of the playwright's. We are, therefore, conscious that the two are constantly tripping over and impeding each other, and the slight but lively plots of the "movies" are being cumbered up with banal dialogue which makes them ponderous and tiresome. It is like having the joke explained to you, you don't enjoy it, neither does the joker.

Another combination of scientific mechanism with entertainment is found in those living pictures, shown with the aid of a stereopticon. In these a living model, clad in a full suit of white tights, poses before a white cloth, and the stereopticon playing on

her makes her appear in varying guises, while the picture it throws on the screen affords a suitable setting. Anything, from a mermaid to a lady in a winter suit with furs going to church, may be presented in this way and from these materials. Very ingenious and sometimes beautiful as they are already, there is no doubt that this idea is capable of being worked out to a higher degree of artistic merit.

Another turn equally interesting from the point of view of mechanical ingenuity and pictorial effect is that of the Flying Ballet. The apparatus used is now so perfect that the flyers can adjust their costumes to its requirements so that it is hardly perceptible. The working of the mechanism, too, is now so smooth and even that there is no effect of artificiality about the motions. Very charming and fairy-like are the effects possible to achieve when to the cunning of the mechanical genius is added the imagination of the artist.

In the water as well as in the air our en-

tertainers perform for our delight. Besides high dives we have endurance divers who rival the amphibious seal in the length of time they will remain under water.

Another water-act that holds its own in its invigorating freshness and out-of-door flavor is that of "The Girl from the Golden West." She swims against a strong current, forced through a tank by some mechanical process; motion pictures of her dashing swim through the Golden Gate having been previously shown. The girlish joyousness with which she accomplishes her undertaking, her freedom from affectation or professional superiority, gives the genuine tonic feeling of a breath of fresh air to her performance. She seems to be just the active sport-loving type of wholesome girlhood that we encourage in our college gymnasiums and high-school basketball teams.

Of the outdoor world, too, are the Wild West acts, the Australian Wood Choppers, the scenes of the darkies in the cotton fields and the campfire acts which we see from

LA PETITE ADELAIDE

time to time. But the "Rubes" and "Siss" country girl types are usually very sophisticated, not to say stagy.

We might go on ceaselessly, for there is no end to the variety of the offerings. But it would be far beyond the compass of this book to try to give account of all. We do not even mention the various acts given in the Revues, though they differ not at all from those of Vaudeville. If we could by any chance mention anything that would prove amusing or interesting and has not yet appeared, there is little reason to doubt that, should it reach the eye of any enterprising manager, we should see it billed for next Monday week.

For they work zealously for their master, the public, do these managers and they have a very potent argument with which they can persuade those who have wares to sell to bring them to their market.

* * * * * * *

And so the curtain falls and the Show is over.

Did you like it? Some of it, yes, some of it, no. I suppose that would be the answer of ninety-nine out of every hundred of the dispersing audience.

Well! it is YOUR show. It is there because it is what is wanted by the average of you. If you want it different you only have to make the demand loud enough, large enough, persistent enough. For these figures you see on the stage are but a reflection of what YOU, their creators want. They are the shadows cast on the screen by the actors in the old-time gallanty-show. The figures may be dwarfed to insignificance or enlarged to preposterous size. Yet they are but the figures of you, yourselves, and represent, if not your actual appearance, some travesty of it made by the relation your own form bears to the source of its inspiration. More or less truly it throws upon its screen the current sentiment of the day. We cannot escape from its influence. The echoes of its songs are in our streets, our homes, our ballrooms, we hear them at our

parades and public ceremonies and here, as I write these words, far from the busy streets, amid woods and hills, the sounds are borne to me over the water of young voices chanting in chorus, and the song is a song of Vaudeville.

We have put our entertainers behind the frame of a proscenium arch and let down a curtain to mark the division between actor and audience. But the actor is still the reflection of his audience.

"The best of this kind are but shadows; and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them."

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